The Green Archer

EDGAR WALLACE

Digitized by Google

LIBRARY

No. 12-a-5 WASECA, MINN

RULES FOR TICKET HOLDERS

1. A book may be retained one week from date of drawin
2. A book may be renewed, FOR ONE WEEK ONLY, by r
turning it to the Library to be rechecked by the Librarian.
3. For the detention of a book longer than the specified tim
a fine of two cents a day during said detention will be charge

THE LIBRARY

CLASS 825W155

BOOK OGre

Digitized by Google

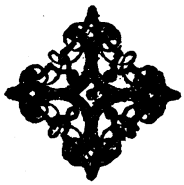
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The Green Archer

By EDGAR WALLACE

AUTHOR OF
"The Clue of the New Pin," etc.



A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York
Published by arrangement with Small, Maynard & Company
Printed in U. S. A.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LIBRARY Digitized by Google

COPYRIGHT, 1924
BY SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY
(INCORPORATED)

Second Printing, August, 1924
Third Printing, February, 1926

Printed in the United States of America

Digitized by Google

825 W155
OGrm

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Good Story	1
II.	The Man Without Fear	5
III.	John Wood of Belgium	11
IV.	The Green Arrow	17
V.	Abe Bellamy and His Secretary	23
VI.	Do-Nothing Featherstone	28
VII.	A Man at Police Headquarters	33
VIII.	Fay Meets an Old Friend	37
IX.	The Green Archer	42
X.	The Handkerchief	47
XI.	The Habits of Abe Bellamy	50
XII.	Valerie's Sprained Ankle	56
XIII.	The Slayer of Children	60
XIV.	The Dogs of Garre	66
XV.	The Gas Bill	70
XVI.	The Dogs Hear a Noise	76
XVII.	At Lady's Manor	80
XVIII.	At El Moro's	86
XIX.	The Wife of Julius	90
XX.	A Warning	94
XXI.	The New Dogs	98
XXII.	A Name in the Paper	103
XXIII.	Spike Pays a Call	109
XXIV.	The Great Adventure	113
XXV.	"Coldharbour Smith"	120
XXVI.	The Chase	124
XXVII.	The Link	129
XXVIII.	Valerie at Garre	133

3-9-91 State dept of educ Gift

959994

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIX.	The Dungeons	136
XXX.	The Story	143
XXXI.	The New Butler Shows His Teeth	148
XXXII.	The Search	152
XXXIII.	Jim Explains	157
XXXIV.	"The Golden East"	162
XXXV.	A Warning to Smith	170
XXXVI.	John Wood Talks	173
XXXVII.	The Man Who Appeared	178
XXXVIII.	The Thermometer	182
XXXIX.	The Grey Lady	188
XL.	The Archer	192
XLI.	Doubt	198
XLII.	Fay Has an Offer	202
XLIII.	The Empty Dungeon	210
XLIV.	Fay Goes Against Her Principles	215
XLV.	The Raid	220
XLVI.	How Valerie Went to the "Golden East"	224
XLVII.	Fay Has a Message	231
XLVIII.	Julius Takes Action	238
XLIX.	The Questioning of Lacy	244
L.	The Passing of Savini	249
LI.	The Green Arrow	253
LII.	The Man in the Boat	256
LIII.	An Offer and a Rejection	
LIV.	Found in the Boat	268
LV.	Valerie Tells a Story	272
LVI.	The Tapping in the Night	278
LVII.	The Trap	283
LVIII.	A Visitor from Belgium	289
LIX.	Valerie Meets John Wood	293
LX.	The Hole in the Wall	298

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER		PAGE
LXI.	The Rifles	303
LXII.	The Cottage in the Wood	309
LXIII.	Bellamy Hears of the Grey Lady	318
LXIV.	"Mr. Bellamy is Dead"	324
LXV.	Trapped	330
LXVI.	The Siege	336
LXVII.	A Green Archer Comes to Lady's Manor	343
LXVIII.	Fay in the Dungeon	346
LXIX.	The Man from Cloister Wood	353
LXX.	The Flood	359
LXXI.	The Last Visit of the Green Archer	363
LXXII.	When the Waters Rose	366
LXXIII.	Julius Roasts Money	372
LXXIV.	The Secret of the Green Archer	376

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE GREEN ARCHER

CHAPTER I

The Good Story

Spike Holland scrawled the last word on the last sheet of his copy, slashed two horizontal lines to notify all concerned that it was the last page, and threw his pen at the window-frame. The nib struck home, and for a second the discoloured handle quivered.

"No unworthy hand shall inscribe baser literature with the instrument of my fancy," he said.

The only other reporter in the room looked up.

"What have you been writing up, Spike?"

"Yesterday's dog show," said Spike calmly. "I know nothing about dogs, except that one end barks and the other end wags, but Syme put me on to it. Said that a crime reporter ought to get acquainted with bloodhounds. That man is collaterally minded. Nothing ever appears to him as it is; he lives on suggestion. Take him hot news of a bank robbery and he'll jump at you for a story about what bank presidents eat for lunch."

The other pushed back his chair.

"You meet that kind of mentality most anywhere," he said. "I dare say our people seem dull and thick-headed to an American by comparison."

"You bet they don't," said Spike promptly. "The men on the desk are a race apart. They're just naturally incapable of seeing life through the eyes of a reporter. Which means that there is something subnormal about them. Yes, sir. You call 'em city editors in the States and news editors in England. That's the only difference. They're all collaterally minded."

He sighed and put up his feet on the desk. He was young and freckled and had untidy red hair.

"Dog shows are certainly interesting——" he began, when

Digitized by Google

the door opened violently and a shirt-sleeved man glared in through spectacles of enormous size.

"Spike . . . want you. Have you got a job?"

"I'm seeing that man Wood about the children's home—lunching with him."

"He can wait."

He beckoned, and Spike followed him to the tiny room he occupied.

"Do you know Abel Bellamy—a Chicago man . . . millionaire?"

"Abe? Yeah. . . . Is he dead?" asked Spike hopefully. "That fellow's only a good story when he is beyond the operation of the law of libel."

"Do you know him well?" asked the editor.

"I know he's a Chicago man—made millions in building, and that he's a roughneck. He's been living in England eight or nine years, I guess . . . got a regular castle . . . and a dumb Chink chauffeur——"

"I know all that 'Who's Who' stuff," said the editor impatiently. "What I want to know is this: Is he the kind of man who is out for publicity? In other words, is the Green Archer a ghost or a stunt?"

"Ghost!"

Syme reached for a sheet of note paper and passed it across to the puzzled American. It was a message evidently written by one to whom the rules of English were hidden mysteries:

"*Dear Sir,*

"The Green Archer has appeared in Garre Castel. Mr. Wilks the buttler saw him. Dear sir, the Green Archer went into Mr. Belamy's room and left the door open. Also he was seen in the park. All the servants is leaving. Mr. Belamy says he'll fire anybody who talks about it, but all the servants is leaving."

"And who in thunder is the Green Archer?" asked Spike wonderingly.

Mr. Syme adjusted his glasses and smiled. Spike was shocked to see him do anything so human.

Digitized by Google

"The Green Archer of Garre Castle," he said, "was at one time the most famous ghost in England. Don't laugh, because this isn't a funny story. The original archer was hanged by one of the de Curcy's, the owners of Garre Castle, in 1487."

"Gee! Fancy your remembering that!" said the admiring Spike.

"And don't get comic. He was hanged for stealing deer, and even today you can, I believe, see the oaken beam from which he swung. For hundreds of years he haunted Garre, and as late as 1799 he made an appearance. In Berkshire he is part of the legendry. Now, if you can believe this letter, evidently written by one of the servants who has either been fired or has left voluntarily because she's scared, our green friend has appeared again."

Spike frowned and thrust out his under lip.

"Any ghost who'd go fooling round Abe Bellamy deserves all that is coming to him," he said. "I guess he's half legend and half hysteria. You want me to see Abe?"

"See him and persuade him to let you stay in the castle for a week."

Spike shook his head emphatically.

"You don't know him. If I made such a suggestion he'd throw me out. I'll see his secretary—a fellow named Savini; he's a Eurasian or something. Maybe he can fix me. The Green Archer doesn't seem to have done anything more than leave Abe's door open."

"Try Bellamy—invent some reason for getting into the castle. By the way, he bought it for one hundred thousand pounds seven or eight years ago. And in the meantime get the story. We haven't had a good ghost story for years. There's nothing to stop you lunching with Wood. I want that story too. Where are you lunching?"

"At the Carlton. Wood is only in London for a couple of days. He is going back home to Belgium tonight."

The editor nodded.

"That makes it easy. Bellamy is staying at the Carlton. You can cover both engagements."

Spike strolled to the door.

Digitized by Google

"Ghost stories and children's institutions!" he said bitterly. "And I'm just aching for a murder with complications. This journal doesn't want a crime reporter; it's a writer of fairy tales you need."

"That's a fair description of you," said Syme, addressing himself to his work.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

The Man Without Fear

The rattle and clang of steel against steel, the staccato drumming of electric rivetters, the muffled pandemonium of hammer and mallet. All these were music to the ears of Abel Bellamy.

He stood by the window of his sitting-room, his hands clasped behind him, his gaze fixed upon such a scene as he could watch for hours. Opposite to his hotel a big building was in course of erection. The steel skeleton of it towered above the puny houses that flanked each side.

Below in the street a small crowd of people had gathered to watch, open-mouthed, a girder going skyward at the end of a spider thread of cable. Higher and higher the big derrick lifted the steel that swung with majestic slowness. Abe Bellamy grunted his disapproval. The girder was badly balanced. He knew to the fraction of an inch just where it should have been fixed.

If the evil deeds of men were, as the ancients believed, written in letters of blood in the place of their perpetration, the name of Abel Bellamy would be splashed red in many places.

On a mean farm in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania; in the grey hall of Pentonville Prison—to name but two.

Abe Bellamy never lost sleep at nights thinking of the past. Remorse was foreign to his nature, fear he did not know. He had done evilly and was content. The memory of the horror of lives wantonly broken, of suffering deliberately inflicted, of children delivered to hardship and pain, of a woman hunted to death by a tiger of hate that the Moloch of his self-esteem should be appeased, never caused him a second's unrest of mind.

If he thought of these old matters at all, he thought approvingly. It seemed right to him that those who opposed

Digitized by Google

him should be hurt. Fortune had favoured him greatly. At twenty he was carrying a hod; at thirty-five he was a dollar millionaire. At fifty-five his million was ten, and he had shaken from his feet the dust of the city that made him and was one with the landed gentry of England, the master of a domain that the flower of English chivalry had won by its swords and built on the sweat and fear of its slaves.

For thirty years he had had the power to hurt. Why should he deny himself? He could regret nothing, being what he was. He stood six feet two in his stockinged feet, and at sixty had the strength of a young ox. But it was not his size that made men and women turn in the street to look after him. His ugliness was fascinating, his immense red face was seamed and lined into a hundred ridges and hollows. His nose was big, squat, bulbous. His mouth broad and thick-lipped; one corner lifted so that he seemed to be sneering all the time.

He was neither proud nor ashamed of his ugliness. He had accepted his appearance as he had accepted his desires, as normal in himself.

Such was Abel Bellamy, late of Chicago, now of Garre Castle in Berkshire, a man born without the gift of loving.

Standing by the long window of the hotel, he watched the work progressing. Who was the builder, what was the building, he neither knew nor cared. The men who moved cautiously along narrow and perilous paths were his own men for the moment. He growled under his breath as his quick eye located a party of three rivetters, who, free from the observation of their foreman, were idling.

Then instinctively his eyes flashed back to the dangling girder. Something within him said "Danger!" Quick as he was, he did not see the accident. The free end of the steel had swung inward to a scaffolding where two men were at work. He heard the crash above the roar of the street traffic, caught a momentary glimpse of a man clinging for life to the scaffolding . . . and then something fell, turning over and over, and disappeared in the confusion of brick-heap and mortar-machines behind the high board that fenced the works.

Digitized by Google

"Hum!" said Abe Bellamy.

He wondered what the contractor would do; what were the laws of this country in which he had made his home for seven years? If it had been his job, he would have had his lawyer round to see the widow before the news reached her, and she would have signed away all claims before she rightly realised she was bereft. But these Englishmen were slow.

The door of the sitting-room opened, and he turned his head. Julius Savini was not unused to being greeted with a scowl, but he sensed something more important than the usual snarl of complaint that was his regular morning portion.

"See here, Savini, I've been waiting for you since seven o'clock. If you're going to stay connected with your job, I want to see you before noon—understand that."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Bellamy. I told you last night I should be late. I only got back from the country a few minutes ago."

Julius Savini's attitude and voice were almost humble. He had not been Bellamy's secretary for a year without learning the futility of opposing his employer.

"Will you see a man from the *Globe,* sir?" he asked.

"A newspaper man?" said Abe Bellamy suspiciously. "You know I never see a newspaper man. What does he want? Who is he?"

"He's Spike Holland, an American," said Julius almost apologetically.

"That doesn't make him any more welcome," snarled the other. "Tell him I can't see him. I'm not going to fall for any of that newspaper stuff. What is it about? You're supposed to be my secretary, aren't ye?"

"It is about the Green Archer." Julius hesitated before he spoke.

Abe Bellamy swung round savagely.

"Who has been talking about the Green Archer? You, you rat!"

"I haven't seen any newspaper men," said Julius sullenly. "What shall I tell him?"

Digitized by Google

"Tell him to go to—here, send him up." If he did not see the reporter, he'd probably invent something, thought the old man. And he was just a little scared of newspapers. It was a newspaper that had made the fuss in Falmouth.

Presently Julius ushered in the visitor.

"You needn't wait," snapped Bellamy, and when his secretary had gone, he growled: "Have a cigar?"

He flung the box on to the table as a man might throw a bone to a dog.

"Thanks, Mr. Bellamy," said Spike coolly, "but I never smoke millionaires' cigars. It makes me sort of dissatisfied with my own."

"Well, what do you want?" rasped Bellamy, looking at the red-haired reporter through narrowed lids.

"There's a story around that there's a ghost in Garre Castle, Mr. Bellamy—a Green Archer."

"It's a lie," said the other promptly—too promptly, in fact. If he had shown any indifference to the suggestion, Spike might have been deceived. The very promptitude of the denial gave him for the first time an interest in the story.

"Who told you this?" asked Bellamy.

"We had it from a reliable source," was the cautious reply. "According to our information, the Green Archer of Garre has been seen at the castle, and apparently has been in and out of your room——"

"It is a lie!" Abe Bellamy's tone was violent. "These crazy English servants are always looking for ghosts. It is true I found my bedroom door open one night, but I guess I must have forgotten to close it. Who is your informant?"

"We had it from three different sources," said Spike untruthfully, "and every story hangs together. Now, Mr. Bellamy," he smiled, "there is something in it; and anyway a ghost puts up the value of an old castle."

"That's where you're wrong," said Abe Bellamy, instantly seizing the opportunity offered to him. "It depreciates the property, and if you put a line about ghosts in your paper I'll bring an action for libel. Get that, young fellow?"

"Maybe the ghost would start something too," said the other amiably.

Digitized by Google

He went downstairs, not quite decided in his mind. Abe Bellamy was not the usual type of millionaire who makes his residence in England and drifts almost mechanically into British society. The man was a boor, half educated, entirely without social ambitions, unless Spike's shrewd judgment was at fault.

Coming into the hall, he found Julius talking with a tall, grey-bearded man of the prosperous workman class, and Julius signalled him to wait.

"You know the room, Mr. Creager? Mr. Bellamy is expecting you."

When the man had disappeared, Julius turned to the reporter.

"What did he say, Holland?"

"He turned down the story. Honest, Savini, is there anything in it?"

Julius Savini shrugged his lean shoulders.

"I don't know where you got the yarn from, and I certainly am giving you no information whatever. The old man gave me hell because he thought I had tipped you off."

"Then it is true," said Spike. "You have had a grisly apparition stalking along your battlemented walls? Say, did he wear any chains?"

Julius shook his head.

"You'll get nothing from me, Holland. I've got a job to lose."

"Who was the beaver you sent up? He looks like a policeman."

Julius grinned.

"He was asking the same question about you when you came down. His name is Creager, he's a——"—he hesitated —"well, I wouldn't say friend; he's an acquaintance of the old man. Probably he's a pensioner. Anyway, he calls pretty regularly, and I imagine he doesn't come for nothing. I'm not wanted until he comes down. Come and have a cocktail."

Spike shook his head. While they were speaking, to the evident surprise of Julius, the man Creager came down the stairs again, an ugly look on his face.

"He won't see me until two o'clock," he said in sup-

Digitized by Google

pressed wrath. "Does he expect I'm going to wait on him? Because, if he does, he's made a mistake. You can tell him that, Mr. Savini."

"What's the trouble?" asked Julius.

"He said two o'clock, I admit; but I'm in town. Why should I wait until this afternoon? Why couldn't he see me this morning?" demanded the bearded man furiously. "He treats me like a dog. He thinks he's got me like that." He turned down a thick thumb suggestively. "He's wild about a reporter. That's you, ain't it?" he asked.

"That's me," said Spike.

"You can tell him"—the man Creager turned to Julius, and tapped the young man's chest to emphasize his words—"that I'm coming at two, and I want a long talk with him, or I'll be having a little conversation with a reporter myself."

With this menace he left them.

"Savini," said Spike softly, "I smell a good story."

But Savini was going up the stairs two at a time on his way to his enraged employer.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

JOHN WOOD OF BELGIUM

SPIKE looked at his watch. It wanted five minutes to one, but he had hardly seated himself to wait for his host before the remarkable John Wood came quickly through the swing doors. He was a tall man, prematurely grey, with a face of singular beauty. The eyes lived, and the sensitive mouth seemed to speak even when it was in repose.

He gripped the reporter's hand warmly.

"I'm not late?" he asked. "I've been very busy all the morning. I want to catch the half-past two train to the Continent, and that means a rush."

They passed into the big dining-room together, and the head waiter conducted them to a secluded table in a corner. Spike, glancing at the delicate face, could not help making a contrast with the fascinating ugliness of the man he had just left. He was the very antithesis of Abe Bellamy, a gentle soul, whose eyes smiled all the time. His every movement was alert and vital, and the long, white hands seemed never to be still.

"Now, what do you want to know? Perhaps I can tell you everything before the soup comes. I'm an American——"

"That I shouldn't have guessed," said Spike, and John Wood nodded.

"I have lived a very long time in this country," he said. "In fact, I haven't been home for"—he paused—"many years," he added. "I don't want to talk very much about myself, and I'll get over the modest recital of my virtues as quickly as I possibly can. I live in Belgium, at a place called Wenduyne. I have a home there for consumptive children, which, by the way, I am moving to Switzerland this year. I am the inventor of the Wood's system of carburation, I am a bachelor—and I think that is about all."

"It is about the children's institution that I wanted to

Digitized by Google

speak to you," said Spike. "We got a story about it from the *Belgian Independent*. They said you were raising funds to provide in every country in Europe a mother college. Now, what is a mother college, Mr. Wood?"

The grey man leant back in his chair and thought for some time before he replied.

"In every country in Europe, and particularly in this country, there is the problem of the unwanted child. Perhaps 'unwanted' is not the word. A widow is left penniless with one or two children to support. It is impossible for her to get her living unless the children are taken care of, and that costs money. There are other little children whose coming is dreaded, whose birth is a calamity, and who must be rushed out of sight, probably into some wretched home, the woman of which, for a few dollars a week, undertakes to look after and to bring them up. Not a year passes in some country or other where these baby farmers are not brought to justice, either for neglecting or for destroying these helpless mites."

He then outlined his scheme: the institution of great mother colleges, to which the unwanted child should be taken, where it would be cared for by trained nurses.

"We would take in probationers, who would pay us a fee for their tuition in the art of baby care. I think in course of time we could make these institutions self-supporting, and we should certainly give to the world healthy boys and girls fit to face the stress of life."

Throughout the meal he talked children and nothing but children. Babies were his joy; he rhapsodised about a tiny German orphan that had just come to his Belgian institution, and grew so animated that guests at other tables looked round.

"If you don't mind my saying as much, Mr. Wood, you have a queer hobby."

The other laughed.

"I suppose I have," he said, and then quickly: "Who are those people?"

A little party had come into the dining-room, two men and a girl. The first of the men was tall, thin, and white-

Digitized by Google

haired, and on his face was a look of settled melancholy. His companion was a smartly dressed young man, whose age might have been anything from nineteen to thirty. He looked to be the kind who lived to justify his tailor. From the top of his glossy fair head to the tips of his enamelled shoes he was an advertisement for good valeting. But it was the girl to whom their eyes returned.

"That's the only woman I have ever seen who comes near to a magazine cover," said Spike.

"Who is she?"

"Miss Howett—Miss Valerie Howett. The old man is Walter Howett, an Englishman who lived for many years in the States in a poor way until oil was found on his farm. And the fashion-plate is English—Featherstone. He's a lounge lizard. I've seen him at every night-club in London."

The party took a table near to where they sat, and Wood had an opportunity of a closer inspection of the girl.

"She is very lovely," he said in a lower tone; but Spike had risen from the table and had gone across to shake hands with the elderly American.

He came back after a while.

"Mr. Howett wishes me to go up to his sitting-room after lunch, Mr. Wood," he said. "I wonder if you'll excuse me?"

"Surely," nodded the other.

Twice during the meal the girl's eyes wandered across to where they sat, with a questioning, uncertain glance, as though she had met John Wood before and was wondering in what circumstances.

Spike had turned the conversation from babies to a subject which was at that moment interesting him more keenly.

"Mr. Wood, I suppose in your travels you never met a ghost?"

"No," said the other with a quiet smile, "I don't think I have."

"Do you know Bellamy?" asked Spike.

"Abel Bellamy—yes, I know of him. He is the Chicago man who bought Garre Castle."

Spike nodded.

Digitized by Google

"And Garre Castle is the home of the Green Archer," said Spike. "Old man Bellamy isn't so proud of his ghost as some people would be, and he has tried to switch me off what looks to be like a pretty good story."

He told all he knew about the Green Archer of Garre, and his companion listened without comment.

"It is queer," he said at last. "I know the legend of Garre Castle, and I have heard of Mr. Bellamy."

"Do you know him well?" asked Spike quickly; but the other shook his head.

Soon after, Mr. Howett's party rose and went out, and, beckoning the waiter, Wood paid his bill and they followed.

"I have to write a letter," said Wood. "Will you be long with Mr. Howett?"

"I'll not be five minutes," said Spike. "I don't know what he wants to see me about, but I guess it won't keep me very long."

The Howetts' sitting-room was on the same floor as Bellamy's, and the old man was waiting for him. Mr. Featherstone apparently had gone, and only the millionaire and his daughter were in the room.

"Come in, Holland," said Howett. He had a sad voice and his manner was gloomy. "Valerie, this is Mr. Holland; Holland is a newspaper man who may be able to help you."

The girl gave him a nod and a half-smile.

"Really it is my daughter who wishes to see you, Holland," said Howett, to Spike's gratification. He looked at the girl dubiously and then at the reporter.

"The truth is, Mr. Holland, I want to trace a lady who lived in London twelve years ago." She hesitated. "A Mrs. Held. She lived in Little Bethel Street, Camden Town. I've already made inquiries in the street. It is a dreadful slum, and there is nobody there who remembers her. I should not know that she was there at all," she went on, "only a letter came into my possession." Again she stopped. "It came to me unknown to the person to whom it was addressed, and who had every reason to keep her whereabouts a secret. A few weeks after it was written she disappeared."

"Have you advertised?"

Digitized by Google

"Yes," she nodded. "I've done everything that is possible. The police have been helping for years."

Spike shook his head.

"I'm afraid I cannot be of much assistance to you."

"That's what I thought," said Howett. "But my daughter has an idea that newspapers hear a great deal more than the police——"

It was a voice in the corridor outside that interrupted, a loud, strident, harsh voice, raised in anger, and followed by a thud. He looked round, and immediately Spike, who recognised the sound, was in the corridor.

A strange sight met him. The bearded man whom Julius had called Creager was picking himself slowly from the floor, and standing in the doorway of his sitting-room was the huge bulk of Abe Bellamy.

"You'll be sorry for this," quavered Creager.

"Get out and stay out," roared Abe Bellamy. "If ye come here again I'll heave ye through the window."

"I'll make you pay!" The bearded man was almost sobbing in his rage.

"Not in dollars and cents," said the old man grimly. "And listen, Creager! You've got a pension from your Government, haven't you? See that you don't lose it." And with this he turned into the room and slammed the door.

Spike went toward the man as he limped down the corridor.

"What's wrong?"

Creager stopped to brush his knees.

"You'll know all about it," he said, and then: "You're a reporter, aren't you? I've got something for you."

Spike was first and foremost a newspaper man; a story to him was meat and drink, the beginning and end of his day's ambition. He went back to Howett.

"Will you excuse me for a time? I want to see this man."

"Who was it that struck him—Bellamy?"

It was the girl who asked, and there was a certain suppressed vehemence in her tone which made Spike open his eyes.

"Yes, Miss Howett. Do you know him?"

"I've heard of him," she said slowly.

Digitized by Google

Spike accompanied the aggrieved Creager into the hall. The man was white and trembling, and it was some time before he could recover his voice.

"It is perfectly true what he said. I may lose my pension, but I'm going to risk that. Look here, Mister——"

"Holland's my name," said Spike.

"I can't tell you here, but if you'll come to my house—Rose Cottage, Field Road, New Barnet——"

Spike jotted down the address.

"I'll tell you something that'll make a sensation. Yes, that's what it will make," he said with relish, "a sensation."

"Fine," said Spike. "When can I see you?"

"Come in a couple of hours' time." And with a nod he was gone.

"That man looks shaken," said Wood, an interested spectator.

"Yes, he's had a bad handling—and he has a story that I particularly want to write."

"I heard him say that," said Mr. Wood with a smile. "And now, Holland, I fear I must go. Come over and see me in Belgium." He held out his hand at parting. "Perhaps one day I will give you a story about Abe Bellamy—the biggest story of all. If you wish for further particulars about the colleges, do not hesitate to wire."

Spike returned to the Howetts' sitting-room to discover that Miss Howett had gone to her room with a bad headache, and that the discussion of the help he could give her was indefinitely postponed.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

The Green Arrow

Reporting to the office that afternoon, Spike turned in an account of John Wood's plan for a super-crêche and took a taxi up to New Barnet. As the cab passed up Fleet Street he saw an evening newspaper placard and tapped at the window, swearing softly to himself, for the poster read:

"GHOST MYSTERY AT GARRE CASTLE."

He bought the newspaper. The account had evidently been supplied by the same person who had sent the letter to the *Globe*, the actual news being contained in five lines. Beneath was a long explanatory note, giving the history of Garre Castle, and the record of previous appearances of the Green Archer.

> "It is a tradition of the country that the mysterious ghost is dressed in green from head to toe. Not only that, but the tradition is that his bow and his arrows are of the same hue."

"In fact," said Spike as he folded the newspaper, "he's green."

It was a long drive to New Barnet, and Field Road proved literally to be a road through fields. Rose Cottage lay back behind high box hedges, and was a creeper-clad house, with a tiny garden in front and apparently a bigger garden at the rear which led to a small plantation. This Spike saw from the cab. Unlatching the small gate, he walked up the flagged path and knocked. There was no answer, though the door was unlocked and was, in fact, ajar. He knocked again, and again received no reply.

Pushing the door open, he called Creager by name, and when that had failed he walked back to the road to look for

Digitized by Google

somebody. There was a woman in sight; she had apparently come from one of the small houses at the farther end of the road.

"Mr. Creager? Yes, sir, he lives here, and he's usually at home at this time of the day."

"He doesn't seem to be at home now. Is there anybody else in the house?"

"No, sir; he lives alone. My sister comes in in the morning and cleans up the house for him. Why don't you go in and wait, sir?"

It seemed an excellent idea, especially as it had begun to rain, and, pushing open the door, Spike walked boldly down the passage into what was evidently the living-room. It was comfortably furnished, and over the mantelpiece was a portrait, which he recognised instantly as the bearded man. He was in some sort of uniform, which Spike could not recognise.

He sat down, and, taking the newspaper out of his pocket, read over again the story of the Green Archer. It was extraordinary, he thought, that traditions of this kind could live in the twentieth century and that there were still people who believed in manifestations such as were described here.

Putting the paper down, he glanced idly out of the window, which commanded a view of the garden, and instantly sprang up. Protruding from behind a bush on the farther side of the tiny lawn was a foot—and it was very still.

He raced out of the room, crossed the lawn, and ran round to the farther side of the bush, and there stopped, paralysed.

Lying on his back, his eyes half closed, his hands clenched in the agony of death, lay the bearded man; and from his waistcoat, immediately above his hands, protruded the long green shaft of an arrow, tipped with vivid green feathers.

Spike knelt down at the dead man's side and sought for some sign of life, but there was none. And then he began to make a rapid survey of the immediate vicinity. The garden was separated from the fields into which it was thrust by a low wooden hedge, over which any agile man could vault. He guessed that Creager had been killed instantaneously and fallen as he had been struck.

Digitized by Google

Jumping over the hedge, he began his search. Ten paces from the fence was a big oak tree. It lay exactly in line with the arrow's flight. Round this he went, examining the ground almost inch by inch. There were no footprints, and the tree itself was in full view of the road. He looked up, caught one of the low branches, and swung himself up until he was astride. Edging forward, he came at last to a place which gave him a full view of the body. Instinctively he knew that it was from this branch that the arrow had been fired. The tree was leafy and offered cover, and it was likely, since the dead man must have been facing the way the arrow came, that his slayer was out of sight.

He must have dropped when he loosed his arrow, thought Spike, and came to the ground again. Here he was rewarded, for the murderer, in jumping down, had left two clear footprints. He had left something even more important, but this Spike did not see immediately. He found it after a while by accident. It was an arrow, similar to that in Creager's body. The shaft was polished smooth and covered with green enamel. The feathers were new, green, and well trimmed. It looked too ornamental for use, but the arrow's point was needle-sharp.

Going back to the house, he sent the taxi-driver to bring the police. They came, in the shape of a uniformed constable and sergeant, and were followed in extraordinarily quick time by a man from Scotland Yard, who took immediate charge of the house and arranged the removal of the body.

Long before the police arrived Spike had made a very searching inspection of the house. This examination included the wholly unauthorised inspection of such of Creager's private papers as he could find. He soon discovered the significance of the uniform which the man wore in his photograph. Creager had been a prison guard, or warder as they call them in England, had served twenty-one years, and had received an honourable discharge. A certificate to this effect was one of the first papers he found in the dead man's bureau. What he was anxious to unearth, however, was some paper which would explain Creager's relationship with Abe

Digitized by Google

Bellamy. There was one drawer of the old-fashioned desk which he could not open and did not dare force.

He found the man's bank-book, however, and learnt to his surprise that Creager was comparatively rich. He had a balance of over two thousand pounds to his credit. A rapid inspection of the pages of this book showed that on the first of every month Creager received forty pounds, which, according to the book, was paid in in cash. His pension was easy to trace because it was paid quarterly. This and the mysterious monthly receipts, and such interests on bonds as the man held, were the only entries on the credit side.

He had just finished making extracts from the pass-book when the police arrived, and he went out to meet them. Shortly afterwards the police surgeon arrived and saw the body.

"He's been dead more than an hour," he concluded. "The arrow has passed right through him. It must have been extraordinarily sharp."

To Scotland Yard men Spike produced the second arrow and pointed out the spot where it had been found.

"The man who did this was an expert," said the detective in charge. "He aimed to kill, and he must have been pretty certain that he would kill. This is the first arrow murder I've ever seen. You had better keep in touch with us, Holland. I suppose you want to go to your newspaper and make your big howl. But first you'd better tell me just why you were here at all."

Spike gave a prompt account of what had happened at the Carlton, and added a further piece of information which left the detective open-mouthed.

"Green Archer!" he said incredulously. "You're not suggesting that this job was done by a ghost, are you? If it was, then I can tell you he was a mighty substantial ghost, because it wanted an arm like iron and a bow like steel to send that arrow through Creager from the distance the string was loosed. We'll go along and see Bellamy."

Mr. Abe Bellamy was on the point of departure for Berkshire when the police officers arrived, and he was neither shocked nor perturbed by the news they gave him.

Digitized by Google

"Yes, it is perfectly true I fired him out. Creager was useful to me many years ago, and I made him a very handsome allowance for the service he rendered me. He saved my life—jumped into the water for me when my boat overturned on the river."

(That is a lie, thought Spike, watching the old man.)

"What was the quarrel about this morning, Mr. Bellamy?"

"It wasn't exactly a quarrel, but of late he's been urging me to lend him the money to buy a piece of land adjoining that on which his own house is built, and I have refused. Today he got a little fresh, threatened me—well, he didn't exactly threaten," corrected Mr. Bellamy with a harsh laugh, "but . . . anyway, he got mad at me, and I threw him out."

"Where did he save your life, Mr. Bellamy?" asked the detective.

"At Henley, seven years ago last summer," replied Bellamy promptly.

(You've had that date fixed in your mind, and that has always been the explanation you were going to offer for subsidising this man, noted Spike mentally.)

"At that time he would be in the prison service," said the detective.

"I believe he was," replied Bellamy, somewhat impatiently. "But when this occurred he was on his holidays. I guess you'll be able to verify all that information from his record."

Spike was satisfied in his mind that, when the records came to be examined, ample confirmation would be found.

"I guess that's all I can tell you, officer," said Bellamy. "This fellow was shot, you say?"

"He was killed by an arrow," replied the officer, "a green arrow."

Only for a second did Bellamy lose control over his face.

"A green arrow?" he repeated incredulously. "An arrow—a green arrow? What in——" He recovered himself with an effort, and a slow smile dawned on his face and made him a little more unprepossessing than usual. "Victim of your ghost story, Holland," he sneered. "Green arrow and

Digitized by Google

Green Archer, eh? Was it you who put the story in the paper?"

"Reporters seldom put stories in other newspapers than their own," said Spike smoothly. "But you bet, Mr. Bellamy, we're going to have a story tomorrow. And that old Green Archer of yours will have a special column of his own."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

Abe Bellamy and His Secretary

"DID THE GREEN ARCHER MURDER CREAGER?

"MYSTERIOUS ASSASSINATION FOLLOWS QUARREL WITH THE OWNER OF GHOST-RIDDEN CASTLE

"Who is the Green Archer of Garre? In what way is he associated with the assassination of Charles Creager, ex-prison warder, late of Pentonville? These are the questions which Scotland Yard are asking. Creager was found dead in his garden yesterday by a reporter of the *Daily Globe*, after a violent quarrel with Abe Bellamy, the Chicago millionaire, whose castle is haunted by the Green Archer. Creager was killed by a green arrow, an exact replica of the arrows that were in use six hundred years ago. . . ."

Abe Bellamy put down the newspaper and looked across at his secretary.

"How much of that came from you I don't know," he growled. "Somebody must have told the reporters about that fool ghost. Now listen, Savini! All this crazy talk of ghosts doesn't scare me. Get that? If this monkey business is to get me rattled, and if ye think that by getting me rattled ye'll be able to make yourself a permanent feature around Garre, you've got another guess coming. I'll smash that fake without squealing to Scotland Yard, believe me!"

He walked to the window and stared moodily into the street. Presently he turned sharply.

"Savini, I'm telling you something. You've got a good job. Don't lose it. You're the only thing of your kind I've ever employed. You're slick and you're a liar, and you suit me. I took you from the gutter—don't forget it. I know that

Digitized by Google

you're crook—you've never been anything but crook—but I engaged you because you're the kind of crook I wanted. Someone I knew all about. D'ye hear that? You'd been running with a gang of card-sharps when I picked you up, and the police were waiting their chance to gaol you. That's how I got to know all about you. When that detective came last night to question me about Creager, one of the first things he asked me was if I knew the kind of secretary I'd got out. You didn't know that, did you?"

Savini's face supplied the answer. The smooth olive of his skin had given way to a grey pallor.

"It's not the first time I'd heard of you," the old man went on remorselessly. "More'n a year ago the police chief—inspector, or whatever you call him—happened to be seeing me about a stick-pin one of the hotel servants had taken, and I got him to stop to lunch. I've always been friendly with the police. It pays. And whilst we were lunching in this very hotel he pointed you out to me—gave me your record. I suppose, when you had a note from me, you thought your prayers for easy money had been answered? They hadn't. You've been straight with me because the week after I employed you the gang was pinched, and you were glad for a hole to hide in."

He walked slowly towards his secretary, and his big finger hooked itself into the opening of Savini's waistcoat.

"That Green Archer stunt is going to end right now," he said deliberately. "And it had better! I'm gunning on anything green, and I don't want to explain to the coroner just how the accident happened. The newspapers say that there's been one Green Archer death. Maybe there'll be more!"

The grip on the waistcoat had tightened, and without any apparent effort he was swinging the helpless young man to and fro.

"You know that I'm a tough, but you think I'm simple. You're wrong. I can give you trick for trick and beat you!"

Suddenly his arm shot out, and Savini staggered back.

"The car at five," said Abe Bellamy, and with a sideways jerk of his head dismissed his secretary for the day.

Digitized by Google

Savini went to his room and straightened himself, mentally and sartorially.

He was perturbed in mind, but he had recovered from his fright. He stood for a long time, his arms folded on the bureau, looking thoughtfully at the reflection of his brown face in the mirror.

He had spoken no more than the truth when he had disclaimed all responsibility for giving the story of the Green Archer to the newspapers. There were many good reasons why he should not advertise the advent of that apparition.

So the old man knew. That discovery had been distressing at first; now it was a relief. He had lived in terror of his antecedents being revealed, but the reason for his fear even Abe Bellamy did not guess. The soft brown eyes that looked back at him from the mirror smiled. Abe Bellamy did not guess! He looked at his watch. It was just after nine, and the day his own until five, so that the excuses he had invented for going out were unnecessary.

The art of serving Bellamy was to leave him alone when he desired solitude. There were days when he did not see the old man from morning until night. There were other days when every waking hour was occupied by the correspondence which his employer accumulated.

A cab deposited him before the entrance of a large residential block in Maida Vale, and, declining the invitation of the elevator boy, he walked up two flights, took a key from his pocket, and opened the door of No. 12.

At the sound of his key in the lock a girl came out into the hallway, cigarette in mouth, to inspect the visitor.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" she said indifferently as he closed the door behind him and hung his hat on the hall-stand.

"Who else could it be?" he asked.

"I've sent the maid out to get some eggs," she replied as he followed her into a well-furnished little sitting-room. "Where were you last night? I thought you were coming to dinner."

She had perched herself on the edge of the table, her slippered feet dangling; a pretty but untidy figure of a girl, with her mop of yellow hair and her fine dark eyes. The

Digitized by Google

dab of powder on her face seemed a little unnecessary, but its presence was explained.

"Don't look at me," she said as he scrutinised her curiously. "I was dancing until three, and I've not had my bath. I had a letter from Jerry this morning," she added suddenly, and laughed at the wry face he pulled.

She jumped down from the table and took a blue envelope from the mantelpiece.

"I don't want to see it," said Savini. "I hate touching things that have come from prison."

"You're lucky not to have been there yourself, my boy," said the girl, lighting a fresh cigarette from the stub of the one she had been smoking. "Jerry will be out of prison in six months. He wants to know what you're going to do for him. You're a millionaire now, Julius."

"Don't be a fool," he said roughly.

"Well, Bellamy is, and there ought to be pickings."

"There are big pickings," said Julius Savini.

He thrust his hand into his pocket and strolled to the window, turning so that his face was in the shadow.

"There's half a million at Garre."

"Dollars or pounds?" she asked without any enthusiasm.

"Pounds."

The girl laughed softly.

"Old Bellamy would be worried if he knew——"

"He knows," said Julius. "He knew all along."

She looked up at him in surprise.

"That you're——?"

He nodded.

"That I'm crook. Those are his own words. He told me this morning."

"What is all this stuff about the Green Archer?" she asked, getting up to close the door as the sound of her servant's footsteps came to her from the hall. "I was reading about it this morning in bed."

He did not answer at once. And then:

"I haven't seen it," he said. "One of the servants thought he saw it, and the old man told me that somebody had opened his door in the night."

Digitized by Google

"That was you," she accused, and to her surprise he shook his head.

"No, there's been no need to go for midnight rambles. I know every part of the castle; and anyway the safe is not a job I would take on single-handed. It requires an expert."

He frowned at her thoughtfully.

"I'll tell you how I feel about this, Fay. The old crowd is breaking up. Jerry's in prison, Ben is in gaol too, Walters has skipped to the Continent, and there are only you and I left of the old gang. It's broke; let it stay broke. What did you or I ever make out of it? A few hard pounds a week, with little enough to spare after we'd paid expenses. The game was too small, and suckers are getting scarce. Here we are, with half a million for the taking. And I tell you this, I'm going half-way to murder to take it!"

He slipped his arm about her waist and kissed her, she alert, suspicious, waiting.

"What's the big idea?" she asked. "I mistrust you, Julius, when you get affectionate. Am I to go and smash his safe, or what?"

He eyed her steadily. Then:

"I know a place—Sao Paulo—where a man can live like a prince on the interest of a hundred thousand dollars. And that is just the amount the old devil is going to pay me; perhaps more. Garre Castle has a secret, Fay. It may be a hundred thousand pound secret. And if the worse comes to the worst, I have a little bottle of invisible ink that will certainly be worth twenty thousand."

Julius was a lover of cryptic language, and enjoyed the mystification on his wife's face.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

Do-Nothing Featherstone

The immaculate young man who had been the third of Howett's luncheon-party was older than his pink, boyish face betrayed. Valerie Howett had guessed that the day her father had introduced him. To Valerie he was at first an object of mild interest. In her travels with her father, whose interests took him frequently to America, she had met in Chicago and in New York, in every big city of the United States, the pampered sons of foolish fathers, boys who had no other thought in life than the destruction of the hours that separated them from their more lurid amusements. She knew the limitations of their interests, which usually vacillated between their fast cars and slow parties; but for the first time she was meeting the English variety of the genus.

In many ways James Lamotte Featherstone was an improvement on all the others she had known. His life was as purposeless, but he possessed the great advantage of modesty. He never spoke about himself; he could talk about other things most entertainingly.

Valerie had first tolerated him because he was more presentable than the detective her father had threatened to hire to accompany her if she persisted in her practice of taking solitary rambles in neighbourhoods of an unsavoury character. And from tolerating him she had begun to like him, despite his exquisite appearance.

On the day following the murder he called to take her to the park.

"I'm going to ask you something," she said when they had reached the sunny park and he had found her a chair by the side of the Row, "and it is very personal."

"Personalities fascinate me," he said unsmiling.

"What do you do besides run around escorting attractive young ladies?"

Digitized by Google

He looked at her hard.

"You *are* attractive," he said seriously. "You always remind me of Beatrice D'Este—the girl Leonardo painted—only your face is more delicate and your eyes ever so much prettier——"

She was scarlet now, and stopped him.

"Mr. Featherstone!" she said awfully. "Don't you realise I was joking? Haven't you English people any sense of humour? I wasn't speaking of myself."

"You don't know anybody else I've ever escorted," he challenged, and tactfully moved to safer ground. "No, I have nothing to do."

"You don't even crease your own trousers," she said tartly, for he had annoyed her.

"No; I pay a man to do that," he admitted. "I brush my own hair, though," he added brightly.

She laughed in spite of herself, and then suddenly became serious.

"Mr. Featherstone, I am going to ask you a very great favour," she said. "I don't know why I risked making you angry with me. My father is rather anxious about me. He is a little old-fashioned and thinks that a girl ought not to go out alone. He even went to the length of proposing to hire a detective to look after me."

"Your father is an intelligent man," said Jimmy Featherstone promptly—which is exactly what he ought not to have said.

"I suppose he is," said Valerie, mastering a retort with some difficulty, "but . . . the truth is that I want to be alone. I want whole days alone. Do you understand, Mr. Featherstone?"

"Yes," said the other.

"I can only really be alone, without scaring father, if he thinks you are taking me some place . . . the theatre or . . . or the museum."

"I should never take you there," protested Jimmy, and the exasperated girl sighed wearily.

"What I mean is this, and I will be very plain: I want you to come for me tomorrow and take me out. And then

Digitized by Google

I want you to leave me and let me take the car where I wish. You can say that you are taking me out for the day. On the river——"

"Rather late for the river," murmured her companion.

"Well . . . some place. Somewhere that will keep me out all day. Daddy is leaving for Scotland on Wednesday night——"

"What you want me to do is to pretend to take you out and leave you to your own devices?"

She sighed again.

"How clever you are. Yes, that is just what I want you to do."

Jimmy Featherstone was drilling a hole in the gravel with his gold-headed cane.

"I will upon one condition," he said slowly.

She looked at him in surprise.

"Condition? What is it?"

He raised his head and looked her straight in the eyes.

"Leave the investigation of Abe Bellamy's affairs to somebody else," he said. "It isn't a woman's job. If the police had searched the plantation behind Creager's house, you would have had some difficulty in explaining your presence, Miss Howett."

For a moment Valerie stared at her companion, speechless and pale.

"I—I don't understand you, Mr. Featherstone," she faltered.

The young man twisted round and faced her with a smile, which was half good-humour and half admonition.

"Miss Howett, you've recently accused me of living a purposeless life. An idle man has plenty of time for observation. You passed my flat in St. James's Street in a taxi-cab that was following the Ford which Creager drove."

"Then you knew Creager?" she said in astonishment.

"I knew him slightly," said Mr. Featherstone, toying with his stick and avoiding her eyes. "I know everybody slightly," he added with a laugh, "and some people a lot. For example, I know that you dismissed your cab at the end of Field Road and that you walked down as far as

Digitized by Google

Creager's house, and then, as though you weren't quite certain what you would do, you came to a stile which connects with a footpath running through the plantation at the end of Creager's garden. The plantation is not part of his land, and it is only in his use because he hasn't troubled to fence off the end of the garden. And in that plantation you waited until nearly eight o'clock last night."

"You're only guessing," she challenged hotly. "Father has told you that I did not come back to dinner——"

"Indeed I am not guessing," he said quietly. "You remained in the plantation because you were afraid to have your presence betrayed."

"Where were you?" she asked.

Again he smiled.

"I also was in the plantation, I'm sorry to say. Otherwise I should have seen our friend the Green Archer."

"What were you doing there? How dare you spy on me, Mr. Featherstone?"

His eyes twinkled, but not a muscle of his face moved.

"You are inconsistent, Miss Howett. A little time ago you were complaining that I did nothing; and now, because I confess to having chaperoned you on a most dangerous expedition——"

She shook her head helplessly.

"I don't know what to think. It doesn't seem like you, Mr. Featherstone. Why should you think I was following Creager?"

Very deliberately he took out a gold cigarette-case.

"May I smoke?" he asked, and when she nodded he lit up and sent a blue cloud into the still morning air.

"You followed Creager," he said slowly, "because—and here I am only guessing—you thought, in his mood of resentment against Abe Bellamy, he would betray his employer; and, incidentally, give you the information that you have been seeking for years."

She could only stare at him.

"You're looking for a woman who disappeared under mysterious circumstances, Miss Howett," said the elegant young man, tracing patterns on the gravel with the ferrule

Digitized by Google

of his cane. "And, rightly or wrongly, you suspect Bellamy of being responsible for her disappearance. You have seized at wilder straws than the one you grasped yesterday. It took me a long time to reconstruct the workings of your mind; but, as I imagine it, you thought that Bellamy would follow his tool to his house, and that you would have an opportunity of hearing them speak. You waited in the plantation nearly two hours, and were on the point of going to the house when you saw the police."

He took out his cigarette and threw it away again. He had suddenly conceived a distaste for smoking.

"I'd give a lot of money to meet the Green Archer," he said softly.

"Then you believe——?" she asked in amazement.

He nodded.

"I not only believe, I am absolutely certain."

She was looking at him now with a new interest and a new understanding.

"What an extraordinary man you are, Mr. Featherstone! You are almost as clever as a detective my father intended to employ to take care of me."

He laughed.

"I have a confession to make, Miss Howett. I am the detective with that commission. I am Captain Featherstone of Scotland Yard, and I've had you under observation ever since you arrived in London."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

A Man at Police Headquarters

Spike Holland was in the midst of his second day's story of the arrow murder when he was called to the 'phone, and he reported to the news editor the purport of the message that had come to him.

"They want me at Scotland Yard. Gee! I'm getting important."

"You're certain about a woman being in this business?" said the news editor, looking up from the scrutiny of the first sheet of Spike's story.

"Sure!" said Spike promptly. "Two people saw her. And I've found the cabman who picked her up in the Haymarket and had instructions to follow Creager's car. And there's a woman who lives down Field Road who says that she saw a lady crossing the field toward the back of Creager's house."

"Do you think they'll be able to identify her?"

"There's nothing more certain in the wide world," said the sanguine Spike, "particularly if I'm guessing right. It is only a question of giving the cabman a chance of seeing her."

In ten minutes he was at Scotland Yard.

"The Chief of H. Bureau wants to see you," said the sergeant on the door.

"H. Bureau is a new one on me," said Spike, "but lead me to him."

A policeman piloted him into a room which, from its size and furnishing, was obviously the office of a very high official. The young man was writing at the desk and looked up as his visitor entered.

"Moses!" gasped Spike. "I've met you before, some place."

"I don't think we've met," smiled the chief, rising and

Digitized by Google

pushing forward a chair. "Sit down, Mr. Holland. I'm Commissioner Featherstone, and as a rule I'm not on view to the general public. I make an exception in your case because I like your face. Will you have a cigar?"

"I'd rather have another compliment," said Spike. "Any reference you may make to my hair will be greatly appreciated."

Jim Featherstone laughed.

"Seriously, Holland, this is the reason I've brought you here. I understand that you have trailed a cabman who took a lady to the end of Field Road and was seen walking toward the house."

He smiled at the other's astonishment, but went on:

"There's no mystery about it, because we control the taxicabs anyway, and the man happened to be uneasy under your questioning, and came and reported to the police that he had carried this lady to her destination."

"Have the other papers got this?" asked Spike dismally.

"None of the newspapers has it, or will have it," said Featherstone quietly. "Not even the *Daily Globe*."

"But we've got the story," said Spike.

"I don't want you to use it. That is why I sent for you. There's nothing to it. I know the lady, and, as a matter of fact, her movements have been satisfactorily explained. I realise that it is a great disappointment to you, because a good murder without a veiled and mysterious woman isn't a murder at all from a newspaper point of view."

Spike grinned.

"It is all right, chief, if that's how you feel about it," he said. "The story comes out."

"I'll give you a clue or two to put in its place," said Mr. Featherstone, toying with a silver letter-opener. "The man who killed Creager has a red scar across his shoulder."

"Is that a theory?" asked the astounded Spike.

"It is a fact," said Featherstone. "And I will give you yet another clue: the murderer either carried a very thick walking-stick or a bundle of clubs. I am inclined to the club theory, because there is a link about a quarter of a mile from the spot where the crime was committed. I admit that

Digitized by Google

I don't know exactly how this information is going to be of any value to you, but maybe you'll prefer to put it by for personal reference when the murderer is caught."

"Is there any definite clue, any that you can regard as workable?"

Jim Featherstone shook his head.

"None; that is, not for publication, because it is true. I'm not being sarcastic, Holland, but you probably know that we only hint at clues when we want to rattle a criminal and push him into making a get-away. It is the last resort of the police to force a wanted man into betraying himself by leaving his usual haunts and going into hiding. More men are trapped through their conspicuous absences than by the finger-prints they leave behind. But the man we want now is not an ordinary criminal."

"What is the idea of that clue of yours—the scarred back?" asked Spike curiously, and not expecting for one moment that his question would be answered. To his surprise Featherstone explained.

"I don't know how long you have been in this country or how well you are acquainted with the processes of the English law. For certain crimes in this country we administer flogging. Some of you people think it is brutal, and maybe from the strictly humanitarian standpoint it is. So is hanging, as a matter of fact. But it has had the effect of wiping out a certain type of crime—the violent hold-up. If a couple of street thieves beat up a citizen in the street and rob him, the judge may order those gentlemen thirty-five lashes. In consequence, robbery with violence has almost disappeared from the criminal character. Or if we find a man habitually living upon poor wretched women, we flog him. It has made that sort of traffic very unpopular. The lash is given for other offences—we call it 'the cat o' nine tails' because it is a whip with nine thongs—such as assault on prison officers. Creager was for seven years the principal flogger in Pentonville Gaol. It is an unpleasant job, requiring an extraordinary nerve and skill, for the law is that the lash must not fall either above or below the shoulders. If it touches the neck it may kill. There is a certain

Digitized by Google

type of brute that can take this punishment and feel no resentment against the man who delivers it. There are others who never forgive, and my own theory is that the murderer was a man who had been in the hands of Creager and had waited his chance for revenge."

"And the thick walking-stick or the bag of clubs?" asked Spike.

"Creager was killed by an arrow, sent from a very powerful bow—probably a bow made of very fine steel. You cannot walk about London carrying bows and arrows without attracting a certain amount of attention. The weapon might be concealed in a hollow walking-stick, or pass unnoticed in a bag of golf-clubs."

Spike went back to his office with a feeling that the bottom had dropped out of his story.

"You can cut out that woman, Mr. Syme," he said. "The police know all about her, and there's nothing to it."

"I always mistrust mysterious women," complained the unimaginative Syme. "There's a wire for you." He reached behind him to the rack, and, taking down a buff envelope, tossed it to his subordinate. Spike opened and read:

"Do you think Bellamy would care to subscribe to my scheme? Does he strike you as a man who is fond of children?"

Spike sat down and laughed until the tears came into his eyes.

"What's the hysteria?" asked Mr. Syme resentfully.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

Fay Meets an Old Friend

The mind of Valerie Howett was in a turmoil. Sheer blank despair, resentment, and a sense of foolishness, were her predominant emotions.

"My dear," said her father, when she told him. "I just had to do it. You are more to me than anything in this whole wide world, and I couldn't afford to take a risk."

"But why didn't you tell me he was a detective?"

For once the saturnine face of Walter Howett creased in a wintry smile.

"But, daddy, he's been watching me all the time and following me around, when I thought I was alone, and I was sure he was just one of those poor useless boys one meets everywhere."

"He's a boy of thirty," said Howett, "and a real good boy, Valerie. I knew his father; he was an attaché at our Embassy in Washington. And you shouldn't feel sore at him, Val, because he has given up a two months' holiday to help me. I thought you'd be tired of your search at the end of that time," he said ruefully, "and would be glad to go back home."

She made no reply to this, though he waited.

"How did you come to find out?" he asked. "I mean, that he belonged to police headquarters?"

"He told me," she said shortly, and he did not pursue his inquiries.

"I hope it doesn't mean he's given up calling," he said. "It makes me more comfortable when he's around."

"He said he was coming to dinner tomorrow night," she said grimly. "Daddy, it's awful to feel that you're under police observation!"

This sense of surveillance, however, did not prevent her from holding Jim Featherstone to his promise. On the day

Digitized by Google

her father left for Scotland he called for her, and was in her company for exactly five minutes. At the Marble Arch end of Hyde Park she stopped the car and opened the door suggestively.

"This is where I go, is it?" smiled Jim.

He was no longer the beautifully valeted young man. His clothes were more human and in a sense suited him better. She thought he was extraordinarily good looking, and found it difficult to believe that he had reached the thirties.

"I won't ask you where you are going, or on what wild adventure," he said as he stood by the side of the car, his hands resting on the window-slot.

Valerie smiled.

"Is it necessary to ask, when in all probability you have two police motor-cyclists following me?"

"No," he shook his head, "on my honour. I'm trusting you today to do nothing that will embarrass me. As your official guardian angel I very naturally take an interest in your fate. I shall call at the Carlton at eight o'clock, and if you haven't returned I'll send a hurry call to every station in England."

She looked back as the car sped away, and saw him standing gazing after her. He was very good looking, and it was ridiculous to believe that he was thirty.

He waited until the car was out of sight, then he turned and strolled back through the park. Late in the year as it was, the day was warm, and the broad paths held a fair sprinkling of people. He walked on, his mind more occupied with the problem of Valerie Howett than that offered by the murder, which was the principal topic of conversation in London that day. Despite the assurance of his deductions, the presence of Valerie in Creager's plantation was a source of uneasiness.

The truth was that he had not seen her in the plantation at all; he had merely seen her when she went in. He had seen her again when she came out. All that she did between the hours of three o'clock in the afternoon and eight o'clock, when she emerged from her hiding-place, had been hidden from him. He hoped, by surprising her, first with the intel-

Digitized by Google

ligence that he had watched her and secondly with the disclosure of his identity, that she would tell him why she had followed Creager. Instead of which she had shut up tighter than an oyster.

That she was seeking somebody, he knew; Howett had told him. Who that somebody was, under what circumstances they had disappeared, he was as much in the dark as ever. He had spent a hectic and weary two months shadowing this beautiful girl, whose restless quest had led her by many perilous paths, if she had but known. Who was Mrs. Held? What object had the girl in seeking her?

Mr. Howett he knew and had met on both sides of the Atlantic. He was a widower, and there was only one child of the marriage. Had there been a sister, the hunt was self-explanatory. Who could be so precious to Valerie Howett that she should spend money like water and take risks that even he shuddered to think of in order to find her? It could not be for an ordinary friend. It would have been more understandable had the object of the search been a man.

He revolved the problem round and round in his mind, an endless circle of speculation and wonder. Then, unexpectedly, he saw an old friend, and instantly all thoughts of Valerie vanished from his mind. He crossed a grass plot, quickening his pace, and came up by the side of the elegant lady who was walking slowly, holding a small dog on a lead. She had the appearance of somebody from one of the residences of the fashionable quarter which runs parallel with the park.

"I thought I wasn't mistaken," said Jim genially. "How are you, Fay?"

The lady looked at him blankly, raising her delicately penciled eyebrows.

"I'm afraid I haven't the advantage of your acquaintance," she said coldly, and looked round as if for a policeman, which amused Jim Featherstone to such an extent that for a second he was helpless with internal laughter.

"Fay, Fay!" he said reprovingly. "Come down from your pedestal and be mortal. How are all the good souls of

Digitized by Google

your exclusive set? Jerry is in prison still, I understand, and the rest of the crowd are still hiding in Paris."

The lady shook her head impatiently.

"My God, Featherstone! It's pretty tough that a woman can't take her chow for an airing without being pestered by a super-cop."

"Your profanity and your slang are deplorable," said Featherstone good-naturedly. "I heard some news about you the other day which rather surprised me."

She looked at him, suspicion and dislike in her eyes.

"What was that?" she asked.

"They told me you were married, both ecclesiastically and civilly. Who is the happy man?"

"You're dreaming," she said contemptuously. "You people at the Yard are too ready to believe ill of anyone. No, I'm not married, Featherstone, though I don't know what would happen if you pressed me very hard. I've always had a weakness for the pretty boy type. I like 'em that way; they're not so clever as the ugly ones."

She looked round at him under her drooping lids.

"What do you say, Featherstone?" she asked with mock earnestness.

"I hate to disappoint you, Fay," he replied, "but I have my family to consider. But seriously, who is the happy man?"

"There isn't any," said Fay. "There isn't a man in the world who's good enough for me. I came to that conclusion long ago."

He had fallen in at her side, and they were walking slowly together, to all appearance a well-bred man and woman, very good to look upon, engaged in a friendly conversation.

"How is that half-breed secretary of old Bellamy's?" he asked carelessly, and she flushed red.

"Where did you get that 'half-breed'?" she asked, her voice sharp and aggressive. "If you mean Mr. Savini, who happens to be a friend of mine, let me tell you that he comes from a very good old Portuguese family, and don't you forget it, Featherstone! And why I should allow myself

Digitized by Google

to be seen speaking to an ivory-headed policeman, I don't know."

"Sorry," murmured Featherstone. "Of course, I ought to have remembered that you never call a Eurasian a half-breed. By the way, he is gone honest, they tell me?"

The exasperated girl swung round on him, and there was a hard glitter in her eye.

"Mr. Featherstone," she said hotly, "I'm not going to hear you talk about my—my friend, and I ll thank you to walk another way."

Jim Featherstone was gazing at her pensively.

"One would almost think that you were married, and to your little Julius. If that is so, Fay, accept my heartiest congratulations."

But she had turned before he could finish his sentence and was walking furiously away, tugging a reluctant chow behind her.

For the second time in ten minutes Jim Featherstone turned to look thoughtfully after a woman.

Later he strolled into the Carlton to renew acquaintance with the friend of Fay Clayton, but Julius had already left with his employer for Garre Castle.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

The Green Archer

Garre Castle, with its gaunt keep and its crenallated walls, offered little hint of the comfort it held. Forbidding and gloomy of exterior, no ray of light shone from its loop-holed walls and turrets. The mullioned windows of Mr. Bellamy's library looked out upon the green lawn of the inner ward, and from these windows one wall of the Sanctuary Keep rose in a stark, unbroken, and seemingly endless line.

There were people who wondered why this man, who never read a book and to whom history made no appeal, should have bought, at a big figure, this home of the dead and gone lights of chivalry. Knowing him, they would not have wondered. It was the strength of it that thrilled this old builder.

There was something in these stones that was in tune with the latent ferocity in his cruel nature. The lightless dungeons with their foot-thick doors, the worn chain-rings fastened to pillars rubbed smooth by the shoulders of tortured humanity, the power and majesty of Garre Castle spoke to the primitive in him and awakened in his soul an atavistic devil that found joy even in the contemplation of forgotten suffering. It was this that made the first appeal when he had seen it twenty years before on a visit to England. Later, Garre Castle figured in such dreams as he had; finally the place became necessary. He had bought it at a heavy figure and had never regretted his purchase.

The castle was the light of his eyes. He was least objectionable here; was, on occasions, almost human. He never slept a night away. If he was in town he did not sleep there. Only the hotel servants and Julius knew this. However important the business might be that brought him to London, he was back at the castle by night, even if he left again

Digitized by Google

in the morning before the world was awake. The castle was his one recreation. He would spend days wandering around the walls, hours in speculation upon some stone. Who placed it there? What was the man's name, what life did he live, what was he paid? Always it came back to that question. There were no unions in those days, no walking delegates. If a labourer got fresh they took him out and hanged him. High from the walls of Sanctuary Keep a stout oak beam projected. Beneath was a narrow doorway. Through this slit men had been pushed, with a hempen collar around their necks, fastened to the beam above. That was the way to deal with workmen who got fresh. And the Green Archer who had stolen his lord's good venison. He had died on that beam. It was proper that he should, thought Abe Bellamy. People who go thieving should hang. That ought still to be the law.

He sat that evening before the huge stone fireplace in the library, watching abstractedly a fire of logs that crackled and spluttered. The room was a handsome one, expensively and usefully furnished. The walls were panelled from floor to raftered ceiling, and over the recessed windows heavy blue-velvet curtains had been drawn. From the fire Mr. Bellamy's eyes roved up to the stone shield above the fireplace, with its rampant leopards, which the action of time had almost obliterated. Beneath, and more distinct, was carved the de Curcys' motto:

RYTE YS RYTE.

"They spelt pretty badly in the old days," thought Abe complacently. He was not much of a speller himself. "Right is right!" A fool thing to say, anyway. Like saying that "black is black" or "water is wet."

It was late, and his evening task had been completed, but he was loth to leave the deep armchair in which he sat. At last he rose, pulled back the curtain which covered the door and unlocked it. Then he returned to the fireplace and pulled a bell-cord. Julius Savini answered the summons.

"You can take all these letters on the table, draft answers, and let me have them in the morning," he growled. "I shall

Digitized by Google

be here for the next month, so if you want any time off you had better tell me."

"I have an engagement on Wednesday," said Julius promptly, and the old man muttered something under his breath.

"All right, you can take it," he said.

His secretary was at the door when Bellamy called him back.

"Savini, you asked me the other day whether I'd made a will. At the time I had an idea that you felt you were doing your duty as a secretary. I've been thinking it over since, and it has struck me that you're not the kind of man that would ask a question like that unless there was something in your mind."

"There was nothing at all," said Savini airily. "I'm supposed to be your secretary, and I ought to know something about your affairs—nothing more."

The old man looked at him from under his shaggy brows.

"That will do," he said gruffly.

When the man had gone he began to pace the room restlessly. There was an uneasiness in his mind which he could not understand, and for which he could find no reason. He went back to his desk, took a key from an inside pocket, and unlocked the lower drawer. He did this almost mechanically, and the leather folder was on the desk before he realised the cause of his restlessness.

"You are a fool," said Mr. Bellamy calmly. "You're lovely, but you're a fool. My God! What a fool you are!"

He had opened the folder and was looking down at a large cabinet portrait of a woman. She was wearing the costume of twenty years before, and it looked singularly old-fashioned and quaint; but the face was very young and sweet, and the calm eyes, that seemed to be searching his, had a beauty that was almost unearthly. Abe Bellamy licked his dry lips and gazed at the picture through narrowed lids. Then he turned it over calmly.

The second photograph was of a man of between thirty and forty.

Digitized by Google

"A fool," said Abe calmly; "you were just that, Mick."

The third photograph was of a child, little more than a baby. This he turned in his hand. At the back was pasted a newspaper cutting:

> "The undermentioned officer was killed in air fighting on or about May 14, 1918. Lieutenant J. D. Bellamy, United States Army."

He turned the photograph over again and was closing the folder when something attracted his attention, and he bent his head closer to the desk. Ash—cigarette ash! Mr. Bellamy did not smoke cigarettes. Julius Savini, on the contrary, did. He stretched out his hand for the bell, but thought better of it. After all, it was his own fault; he knew the character of the man, and if he could not keep his private documents from the curious eyes of a lock-picking crook he only had himself to blame. Before he left the library that night he put the folder in a wall-safe that the panelling hid and locked the door. He did this every night. For the space of two hours nobody could enter the library.

Julius, working in a room at the other side of the entrance-hall, had his door ajar and saw his employer come out and turn the switches that extinguished the library lights.

"You can go to bed," said Bellamy gruffly.

It was the nearest he ever approached to saying "good-night."

His bedroom was the one apartment that looked outwards from the walls of the castle, for it was situated in the angle of what was known as the Hall Chamber—a great room, darkly panelled and seemingly bare of furniture. There were two doors to the room, an outer of stout oak and an inner a framework covered with ancient leather. To this latter was attached a steel latch, which was connected by means of a silken cord to a pulley within reach of Mr. Bellamy's hand when he was in bed. By this means it was possible for him to keep his door fastened during the night

Digitized by Google

and to lift the latch in the morning to his servant without getting out of bed. He closed the outer door and locked it, shut the leather door and slipped the latch in its socket. Then he undressed and went to bed by the light of a candle. His last act before retiring was to take from an inner pocket a long, narrow key, which he put under his pillow. He had followed the same routine for eight years.

He was a man who slept well but lightly, and instantly he was asleep. Three hours later he was as instantly awake. He never drew his curtains at night. A full moon was shining in a cloudless sky, and though the rays did not fall upon the window there was sufficient reflected light in the chamber to enable him to see clearly what was happening. The leather door was slowly opening—inch by inch, noiselessly, steadily.

He waited, moving only to thrust his hand beneath his pillow and grip the butt of the automatic which he had planted there in preparation for some such contingency as this.

The door was now wide, and he expected every second to see the intruder pass into the room. Rising stealthily in bed and resting his elbow on his knee, he covered the edge of the door.

A minute passed, and there was no sound or sign of the intruder, and, throwing back the bedclothes, he leapt to the floor and ran out through the door, pistol in hand. The moon was streaming through the windows of the corridor, flooding the hall with light.

At first he saw nothing, and then it seemed that the Thing moved from the shadow into the full light.

A tall, thin, green figure, with a dead white face, that stood stiffly facing him, bow in hand. Green from head to toe, a vivid, startling skin-tight green that could not be mistaken. Green everywhere, save that white face that stared blankly.

For a second only the old man stared spellbound, and then his pistol jerked up and he fired twice.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

The Handkerchief

As Abe Bellamy fired the figure disappeared from view. It seemed to melt into the black shadow instantly. Abe ran forward, his pistol arm extended stiffly, but when he came to the spot where the figure had been there was no sign of archer, no other evidence of his presence than two bullet holes in the panelling of the wall.

The old man made a quick search. There was a door near where the figure had disappeared, which led to a circular staircase and down to the servants' quarters. He tried the door; it was locked. And then a thought struck him, and he went quickly back along the corridor, past the open door of his own room, and came at last to where Julius Savini was sleeping.

The door was fastened, and he rapped sharply.

"Savini!" he called.

There was no answer. By this time the servants had been aroused, and he caught a glimpse of a man in shirt and trousers coming toward him and called him by name.

"What is wrong, Mr. Bellamy?"

"Don't ask fool questions," snarled the old man. "Get dressed, rouse all the servants, and search the castle. 'Phone down to the lodge and wake the keeper. Hurry."

At that moment Savini's door opened, and he stood, a startled figure in his pyjamas, holding a lighted candle in his hand.

"What——" he began.

Bellamy pushed past him into the room and glanced round suspiciously. One of the long windows was open, and he strode across and looked out. A narrow parapet ran immediately beneath the window. It was broad enough for a man to walk upon, given the requisite nerve.

"Didn't you hear the shot?"

Digitized by Google

"I heard something. I think it must have been you pounding on the door. What has happened?"

"Dress and come down to the library."

Suddenly he lurched forward without warning and jerked open the jacket of Savini's pyjamas. A square foot of bare chest was his reward, and he grunted his disappointment. He had expected to see a skin-tight green vest.

Savini dressed quickly and went down, to find the old man in the library, pacing up and down like a caged lion.

"Who locked the door of the servants' stairway?" he asked.

"I did," was the reply. "You gave me instructions to see that the door was locked every night."

The old man eyed him keenly.

"And you've got the key, of course?"

"As a matter of fact, the butler has it. I give it to him because he's up earlier than I. He has to open the door to let in the cleaners."

"Where is the key now?" snarled Bellamy, his red face inflamed still further. The great jaw was out-thrust and his eyes were the merest slits. "I tell you this, Savini, if you're not in this Green Archer fake, I've made one of the few mistakes that I've ever made. Find Wilks."

Savini went out into the grounds to discover the butler, accompanied by the two keepers that Bellamy maintained.

"I've got the key in my pocket," said Wilks, when the other had explained his errand. "It couldn't have gone that way, Mr. Savini."

He was carrying a bright vapour lamp, and this, when he came to the library, the old man requisitioned. They went upstairs again to the bedroom floor, and the butler turned the key of the little door and swung it open.

"Give me that lamp," said Bellamy. He pulled his pistol from his pocket and went cautiously down the circular staircase, followed by the two men. At the foot was another door, which was unlocked, and this led into an annex of the castle kitchen—a vaulted chamber used as a storehouse for provisions. Both doors which led from this apartment were bolted from the inside. Mr. Bellamy cast the light of his lantern up the broad chimney, but saw nothing.

Digitized by Google

"He couldn't have gone this way," he grumbled, and then irritably: "There was no other way he could have gone!"

The light of dawn was in the eastern sky when the search was finally finished. Mr. Bellamy sat before the newly kindled fire in the library drinking a cup of scalding hot coffee with savage, noisy gulps, whilst his secretary sat silently, and a little wearily, watching him. He stifled a yawn, not so furtively but the old man noticed it.

"There's something behind this Green Archer business, Savini," he said, breaking a silence that had lasted the greater part of an hour. "A ghost! Pah! I believe neither in ghosts nor devils. There is nothing on God Almighty's earth, under or over it, that can scare me! I am devil-proof and ghost-proof, Savini, and that fellow has got to be bullet-proof to get away with it if I ever find him! Well?" He swung his head round sharply toward the door.

It was the butler, a stately man despite the scantiness of his attire.

"I took the liberty of going down into the store-room again, Mr. Bellamy," he said, "for another search, and I found this."

Bellamy jumped up and snatched the thing from Wilks' outstretched hand. At first he could not see what it was; it looked like a small red ball, but when he took it in his hand he saw it was a handkerchief. It was wet with blood, and Bellamy's brows met.

"So I got the swine after all!" he said exultantly. "Do ghosts bleed?" he snarled round at Savini. "Tell me that, my friend. Does a ghost bleed?"

He opened the handkerchief to its full extent.

"A woman's," he said.

It was a delicate thing, of fine fabric and lace, and in one corner was a monogram. He carried the handkerchief to the table and held it under the light.

"V. H.," he said and frowned again. "V. H. Who in hell is V. H.?"

He did not glimpse Savini's face nor see him start.

V. H.! Valerie Howett!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI

The Habits of Abe Bellamy

A clear, frosty morning found Mr. Bellamy walking slowly across the meadows toward the lodge. He was a man who had the extraordinary knack of adjusting his requirements of sleep to circumstances. He could sleep twelve hours at a stretch; he could rise as fresh with two. He was making the journey to the lodge because it was one of his rules never to see strangers at the castle. People with whom he had an appointment got interviewed in a big room set apart for the purpose at the lodge gates.

The sour-faced keeper touched his hat as the Chicago man went into the lodge to find the local policeman waiting patiently.

"Good morning, sir. They tell me there's been some trouble up at the castle."

Bellamy bared his teeth.

"Tell me who told you that, and he'll tell nothing else!" he said unpleasantly.

He pulled his hand out of his pocket and threw the note it held upon the table.

"There's a little present for you, officer," he said, "and you can forget about any trouble at the castle. What happened was, I had a bad dream and shot at a shadow. Thought it was a burglar."

"Very good, sir," said the obliging officer of the law. "I haven't reported this to my chief."

"Well, don't," said the other. "Now see here, officer. I guess there's little that happens in this village that you don't know. Have you had any strangers here lately?"

The gratified officer lifted his chin and screwed up his face in a grimace of profound thought.

"Yes, sir, there has been one or two. There was a lady who came down to see over Lady's Manor."

Digitized by Google

"Lady's Manor?" said Bellamy quickly. "Is that the old house on the road?"

"That's it," said the officer. "It belongs to Lord Tetherton and it is a tumbledown sort of place which would cost a lot of money to put in repair; which is one of the reasons it has never let. Some parts of it are as old as the castle."

"When did she come to Garre?" asked Bellamy keenly.

"Two days ago. Quite a nice lady, remarkably pretty. I caught sight of her just as she was driving away."

"Do you know where she came from?"

"London, I understand, sir. The car had a London indicator on it, and I think she travelled by way of Reading. The woman who keeps the keys of Lady's Manor said she came from Solders, the house agents. They've got the property in hand."

"Was she alone?"

"Yes, sir. I saw nobody with her."

Bellamy went out of the room to the lodgekeeper's sitting-room, where a telephone had been installed. In a minute he was talking to the house agent.

The agent remembered the circumstances perfectly. The lady had come from London, and he had given her an order to view the property. No, he hadn't asked her her name; it was not customary to take particulars of possible clients.

"If she writes to you or comes to you again, I want to know all about her," said Mr. Bellamy, and hung up the receiver.

With the coming of daylight a very close inspection of the store-room had been made. He hoped to find a trail of blood which would bring him nearer to the solution of this mysterious appearance. But apparently the handkerchief had been used only too well. There was no stain visible. He sent Savini to Guildford to make closer inquiries.

He was content for the moment to overlook the unwarrantable intrusion of his secretary into his private affairs. That could wait.

Julius was only too glad to get away. He wanted to satisfy himself on one point, and, his business finished at

Digitized by Google

Guildford, he hurried to London and made straight for the Carlton Hotel.

"No, I don't think so," said the clerk. "I haven't seen Miss Howett all the morning. I'll ring up to her room and find out. Do you want to see her?"

Julius hesitated a moment.

"Yes," he said.

He had decided upon a bold and dangerous move. He waited whilst the clerk 'phoned, and his eyes lit up as he followed the drift of the conversation.

"Sorry, Mr. Savini," said the man, hanging up the receiver. "You won't be able to see Miss Howett. She hurt her foot last night getting out of a cab and she's in the hands of the doctor. That's what her maid says. I remember now that I haven't seen Miss Howett since yesterday afternoon."

Julius was mystified as he came out of the hotel. That "sprained ankle" meant "gunshot wound." But what was she doing at Garre? What object had the daughter of the rich Mr. Howett in masquerading as a green archer? His theory was a fantastic one, built on the identity of Valerie Howett's initials with those on the handkerchief—that and the coincidence of the girl's sprained ankle. There were hundreds of women with the same initials. Still, it was strange.

If there was one person in the world whom Julius did not want to meet that day it was Spike Holland. Yet he had not taken a dozen steps from the door of the hotel when the reporter pounced on him. Hate in the weak is the child of fear, and, intensely as he loathed the man he served, and who never passed a day without heaping insults upon him, he was at the same time terrified of his wrath.

"I can't stop, Holland. I only came up . . . If you see the old man, for Heaven's sake don't say you saw me in London! I'm supposed to be in Guildford."

"He had a visitation last night?" said Spike.

"I swear to you——" began Julius.

"Aw! Come off it! What's the use of pulling that stuff? We've got a man planted in the village; put him there last

Digitized by Google

night. He's just 'phoned us to say that the Green Archer showed up last night, and old man Bellamy loosed off his automatic and shot the eye out of a Gainsborough!"

"It's not true!" said Julius violently. "If this gets into the paper and the old man knows I've seen you—— Listen, Holland. I'll do anything for you. I'll tell you the whole story if you'll keep me out of it."

"Would I ever put you away?" asked Spike, shaking his red head reproachfully. "Come across, Julius. Let's hear it."

"Well I don't exactly know what's happened," began Julius, and the other waited.

"That's a darned fine start for a piece of authoritative information! Still, get to the story."

Julius told him faithfully what had happened, interlarding almost every sentence with a passionate plea for secrecy. He had all the Eurasian's characteristics, and combined an almost reckless disregard for consequences with a craven fear that at times was pitiable. He could harbour dark and sinister plots against Abe Bellamy, the execution of which might bring punishment he dared not think upon; and yet he literally trembled at the bull-roar of him and grovelled before his anger.

"Tell me what Bellamy does at the castle, what sort of life he lives. Does he entertain?"

"Entertain!" said the other scornfully. "There hasn't been a stranger at Garre since I've been there. He wanders round the estate, or else he spends his time fooling about the walls. His evenings he passes in the library by himself. Nobody interrupts him; as a matter of fact, you can't, because he keeps the door locked. From nine to eleven are his hours at night, and sometimes for an hour in the morning."

"And he always locks the door?" asked the interested Spike.

"Both doors; there's one at each end. But for the love of Mike——"

"Have no fear, dear heart," said Spike. "Can you tell me anything more about him?"

Digitized by Google

Julius, who had already told too much, licked his dry lips and looked round as though seeking a method of escape.

"That's about all," he said. "And you'll swear to me, Holland, that you'll not give me away?"

"Where does he dine?"

"In the library as a rule. The dining-room is very seldom used. And now I must go, Holland." And before Spike could stop him he had flown.

On the way back to Guildford, inwardly quaking, Julius recalled the incidents of the talk, beads of perspiration standing on his forehead as he realised the appalling character of his indiscretion. He had not told about the handkerchief, he was happy to remember, and really that was the best story of all.

He found his employer in a fairly pleasant mood. He asked no inconvenient questions as to the reason for his secretary's long absence, and, much to Savini's relief, he himself suggested that the story was certain to get into the newspapers.

"You can't stop these chicken-hearted people from squealing," he said. "Half the servants have given me notice. And even that fat hog Wilks talks about going. I've told him, if he leaves before I'm ready for him to go, I'll sue him for breach of contract. Savini, see that all the lamps in the corridors are left alight tonight."

"Do you expect another visit?" asked Julius conversationally, and received a curse for his pains.

By daylight Bellamy had examined the doors of his room. The old-fashioned outer door could, he found, be unlocked with no difficulty at all by a man equipped with the necessary tools. The leather door, with its interior latch, seemed safe enough, and he was puzzled to account for its forcing. With a magnifying-glass he examined the leather surface carefully, thinking that he would detect some injury to the leather; but there was none. Fixed in the framework of the door, and designed to prevent the catch from rising too high, was a short iron rod, the end of which showed on the outer side. He thought at first that this might have been

Digitized by Google

extracted and the latch lifted that way, but found that it was impossible. There was no transom above the door, and though Abe went over the walls of the bedroom carefully and made a thorough inspection of the ceiling, he could see nothing that would explain the mystery of that slowly opening inner door. That night he slept with his automatic on a table by the side of his bed. He woke at five o'clock in the morning to find both doors wide open and his pistol gone!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII

Valerie's Sprained Ankle

"Father," said Valerie Howett that morning at breakfast, "I want a country-house."

Mr. Howett looked up.

"What's that?" he asked, startled.

"I want a country-house," said Valerie.

He thought she looked tired and pale. There were dark shadows under her eyes, and a certain listlessness of manner which caused him some concern.

"I've seen a wonderful old place. It isn't far from London, and it has the disadvantage of adjoining Abel Bellamy's estate."

"But, my dear," said the troubled man, "I have certain duties to perform in America, and I can't stay on here through the winter. Though it could be fixed, I suppose," he added. "Where is this place?"

"At Garre—it is called Lady's Manor, and is an old dower-house that at one time belonged to the castle. It would want a whole lot of renovating." She looked down at her plate and went on tactfully: "I thought it was just the place for you, daddy, if you are ever going to write your book."

Mr. Howett dreamed a dream of writing a political history of England. It was a project he had had in mind for twenty years and for which he had accumulated an immense amount of data. The fact that perfectly good political histories of England existed was less a deterrent than a spur to emulation, and Mr. Howett scratched his cheek thoughtfully.

"It is so very quiet and peaceful. I'm sure, daddy, you'll never be able to write your book when you get to America with all your business distractions and your engagements. And of course you couldn't write in a noisy town like London, which is almost as bad as New York."

Digitized by Google

"Quiet, is it?" said Mr. Howett feebly.

"You could hear an infinitive split," she said flippantly with a touch of her old buoyant spirit.

"I don't know that that's a bad idea, Val," said her father, leaning back and contemplating the ceiling. "And the rest would be good for you. It isn't a bad idea. I'll cable New York and see if it can be arranged. You're not afraid of ghosts?" he asked dryly, and she smiled.

"No, I'm not afraid of ghosts," was the quiet reply, "if by ghosts you mean the Green Archer."

"That is certainly a queer business." Mr. Howett shook his head. "I don't know Bellamy, but from what I've heard of him I should imagine that he's the last man in the world to be scared by anything except an income-tax official."

"You've never met him?"

Her father shook his head.

"No, I've never met him. I've seen him often enough—he's been here in the hotel. I don't like him, and I'm not greatly impressed by that yellow-faced secretary of his."

She rose, and he hastened to her side to help her from the room.

"Valerie, you must see the doctor or an osteopath about that ankle of yours."

"It will be quite well today," she said. "I'm going to lie down, do nothing, and see nobody."

She waved his assistance aside with a laugh and walked to her room unaided, if a little shakily. Later in the morning came a visitor who would not be denied. Mr. Howett knocked on the door of his daughter's bedroom.

"Here's Captain Featherstone. He says he wants to see you. Can he come in?"

"If he promises not to bully me," came the reply. "I'm not in the mood to be lectured."

"Why on earth should he lecture you?" asked her astonished father.

"Tell him to come in."

Jim Featherstone came into the bedroom on tiptoe, with such an exaggerated air of concern that the girl could have shaken him.

Digitized by Google

"It is very sad to see you stretched so low," he said; "and please don't scowl, Miss Howett. I have come here oozing sympathy."

Mr. Howett went back to his sitting-room to write out a cablegram. And then:

"Where were you last night, young lady?"

"In bed," she replied promptly.

"And the night before?"

"Also in bed."

"Will you think I am indelicate," he demanded, "if I ask you whether in your dreams you paid a visit to the salubrious neighbourhood of Limehouse, looking for a man who is known as Coldharbour Smith?"

She uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"Wait!" He lifted a solemn hand warningly. "In searching for Mr. Coldharbour Smith, did you tumble into a free-for-all fight in a restaurant mainly frequented by Chinks and negroes?"

She shuddered at the remembrance.

"From which you were rescued by an honest but homely sailor—not, however, before you were badly kicked by one of the brutes."

"You weren't the honest but homely sailor?" she said, aghast.

He shook his head.

"No; he was one of my men—Sergeant Higgins. A very good fellow, though there is nothing of the male vamp about him. Why do you do these things?"

"Because I must," she answered doggedly. "I ought to have seen Creager before this terrible thing happened. I knew of him, knew that he was on Bellamy's pay-roll for some horrible thing he had done in the past. And this other man." She shivered again. "It was terrible."

"Coldharbour is not nice," agreed Captain Featherstone. "People who run the kind of establishments that he runs are not as a rule—pleasant. So Coldharbour is also on the pay-roll, is he?" he mused. "I didn't know that. Who—do you get all your information?"

Digitized by Google

"I have paid for it," she said, declining a direct answer, "and I think it is fairly reliable."

He considered for a few moments, studying the carpet attentively.

"My own impression is that you're defeating yourself," he said. "Fortunately, Coldharbour was not on view the other night. If he had been, Bellamy would have known within twenty-four hours."

He saw the tears come to her eyes, and the unexpectedness of the sight took his breath away.

"I've tried everything," she said, "everything. I suppose I've been wilful and foolish and vain enough to believe that I was cleverer than all the police in the world, but I'm beginning to think I'm not."

His eyes met hers.

"Are you chasing a shadow, Miss Howett?" he asked gravely.

"No, no, no," she cried with vehemence. "I'm sure of it. Something here tells me that I am right."

"Will you answer me this question?" said Featherstone, lowering his voice. "Who is the woman you are seeking?"

He saw her lips close tightly.

"I cannot tell you that," she said. "It is not my secret alone."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII

The Slayer of Children

It was a sudden impulse and a desire to meet again a man so far from the world and its everlasting struggle that made Spike Holland jump at the suggestion offered by his news editor that he should try to persuade John Wood, of Wenduyne, to contribute a series of articles on child welfare.

Leaving London by the early boat-train, Spike spent five uncomfortable hours on a bleak and troubled sea. It was not so much the possibility of securing the articles—they were certain, because Wood had already expressed his willingness—as the likelihood of obtaining even a scrap of information about Abe Bellamy that took him abroad. There was curiously little data available concerning the old man, and Spike had the impression that the philanthropist could have told him a great deal. The abruptness with which he had changed the subject when Bellamy was mentioned suggested this.

Spike was glad to step to the solid foundation of Ostend Quay. He had half an hour to wait in the Place de Gare before there hove in sight the little tram that runs to the Dutch frontier, and he was glad to get to the shelter of a first-class compartment. Rain was now falling heavily, and a chill wind swept bleakly through the square. A frequent visitor to Belgium, he knew the route by heart, that dreary way across the dunes, the only points of interest the deserted gun emplacements which the German left in his retreat. Le Coq was a howling wilderness, but Wenduyne had the appearance of a town. A summer resort, it was deserted now save for a shivering policeman, who stood in the tramway shelter and eyed him curiously as he struggled up the steep incline that led to the digue in the face of a strong north-westerly wind.

The digue was a desolation. The faces of the pretty villas

Digitized by Google

were boarded up, and billows of sand lay in patches on the neglected promenade. The tide was in, and a tawny sea was lashing furiously at the very foot of the embankment as he walked swiftly along, his coat buttoned to his chin. Presently he came to 94.

A tall, narrow-fronted villa like its fellows, its stoop and entrance were hidden behind a grey weather-board, pierced by one door, at which he knocked. There was no answer, and he knocked even louder.

A third time he knocked, with no success, and then he decided to try the rear of the building.

His first knock at the back door was answered by a squat old woman with a slight moustache. She looked at him a little uncertainly.

"What is the name? M'sieur does not receive," she said in French.

"He expects me, aunty," said Spike. "I wired him."

The woman's dull eyes lit up.

"Perfectly I remember. Will m'sieur come this way?"

She led him up a short flight of uncarpeted stairs and knocked at a door on the landing. A voice bade her enter, and she went in before the visitor.

Spike found himself in a long, and, because of its length and height, apparently narrow room, the one wall of which was hung with tapestries, the other covered almost to the ceiling with bookshelves. Light came from two silver electroliers, and these were ablaze, for the only natural illumination was that which came through a stained-glass window at the end.

John Wood was sitting at a large ormolu writing-table as the visitor entered, and he rose and put down his pen.

"You came in spite of the weather? Stout fellow! Sit down, Mr. Holland. And before you ask me, I will gladly undertake the writing of the articles you referred to in your telegram. I need all the publicity I can get for my scheme, and I am a shameless advertiser."

They discussed the articles in detail, and Spike faithfully conveyed all the prejudices, requirements as to length and subject that Syme had impressed upon him.

Digitized by Google

The squat lady with the moustache brought wine and coffee, with wafer-like biscuits.

"How quiet and peaceful you are here!" said Spike enviously. "I thought you were a bit nutty, living in Wenduyne through the winter. What a place to write!"

John Wood smiled.

"I won't take you up to see the quiet-disturbers. They are enjoying their siesta."

"Have you any children here?" asked Spike in astonishment, and Wood nodded.

"Thirty," he said. "Three floors full." He pointed to the stairway that led to the upper part of the building. "I have only the quite healthy ones here. The sanatorium is at the back of the town."

They talked babies for an hour. Mr. Wood seemed inclined to talk of nothing else.

"Mr. Wood, I have an idea that you know a great deal more about Abe Bellamy than you say. You don't like him, do you?"

Mr. Wood was playing with a golden figure of Pan, an exquisite little statuette that stood on his writing-table.

"I know enough to hang him," he said without lifting his eyes.

Spike heard, amazed.

"You know enough to hang him?" he repeated. "That's a pretty serious thing to say."

Wood raised his eyes.

"It might be if I were not speaking in absolute confidence to a man I trust," he said.

Usually Spike hated to be told anything in confidence, but for once he was eager for unpublishable news.

"I have no proof—absolutely none," the child-lover went on. "Nevertheless, I know sufficient to hang him. I don't say that he would hang on my unsupported statement. The law is very tender of human life."

"It was a child, of course," said Spike. "Without suggesting that you have no use for grown-ups, or that you would not get heated up over the shooting of a fat man, I fancy from your tone that it was a child."

Digitized by Google

"He killed a child," nodded the other, "a child I dimly remember having seen. Whether he or one of his hirelings was immediately responsible I do not know. He hates children. I wonder if you took my wire seriously, the one in which I asked you whether Bellamy was interested in babies? It was a joke—a grim and perhaps a foolish joke. I sent it on the impulse of the moment. Abe Bellamy! He would sooner take his last dollar and cast it into the sea than give the filings of it to help a child!"

"Can't you tell me what he did—was it in America?"

"In America many years ago," said Wood. "I'm afraid that I have already said too much. Sooner or later I shall have proof. I have had two men working on the slight clues I have been able to furnish, and they have been working for years, one in London, one in America."

"He was in trouble with a children's protection society in America?"

"I know; but that had nothing to do with the case I am referring to. There was another case in New York city. He nearly killed an office-boy; threw him down a flight of stone stairs. Yes, I have Mr. Bellamy's public record at my finger-tips. It is his private record that I am seeking. The man is a born brute. It isn't only children that he has beaten. It cost him five thousand dollars to stop a case for assault brought by his valet. He hasn't had a valet since."

"The Lord makes queer people," said Spike.

"The devil makes queerer," retorted John Wood, his fine face darkened. "He throws some men back to the animal stage of existence."

Spike launched a question that he had been pondering all the way across the sea.

"Do you think that the Green Archer is one of his victims?" he asked, and John Wood's brow cleared.

"There are quite a lot of people," he said quizzically, "who think that the Green Archer was invented by a certain newspaper correspondent, whose name it would be impolite to mention to your face!"

A staggering arraignment of his veracity which amused Spike.

Digitized by Google

"I'd be glad to be the author of a stunt that fooled England," he confessed; "but unfortunately the credit goes to the Green Archer himself."

He told the story of the last visitation, and John Wood questioned him closely.

"Who saw the 'ghost' besides Abel Bellamy?"

"Nobody. Perhaps the old man invented it."

"It isn't likely." John Wood shook his head. "There is nothing subtle about Bellamy. He's just animal all through. You may dismiss that supposition from your mind. The Green Archer is real enough if Bellamy has seen him."

His face clouded again and he lay back in his chair deep in thoughts. They were evidently not pleasant. Suddenly he rose, and, going to a safe at the end of the room, he opened it. He was there for some time, and when he returned he had something in his hand.

Spike had risen to go, for he had only a few hours at his disposal and he had taken up a lot of time discussing the articles.

"Look at that, Holland."

It was a baby's shoe of white kid, stained and discoloured.

"Some day, if judgment does not overtake him before, I will show this shoe to Abe Bellamy in an American court of justice. It will be a woeful day for him!"

It was at this moment that the short old woman with the moustache came in with a broad grin on her homely face, and in her arms a tiny bundle of white.

"M'sieur, the little *Allemande* will not sleep until she has seen you."

She held up in her arms a rosy-faced baby with big, staring eyes that sought first the glittering chandelier. From the light she moved her head jerkily toward John Wood, and opened her small, wet mouth in a delighted gurgle.

The change in the man was amazing. He seemed to melt instantly. The laughter and bubbling joy that was peculiarly his came back to his face as he reached out and caught her in his arms.

"Here is a coin from my treasury, Holland, more wonderful than Bellamy's millions. A little enemy! How ferocious

Digitized by Google

she is, Holland! You may call her Hun and she doesn't care!"

The baby's soft cheek was against his, and Spike saw the tears in his eyes and marvelled.

As Spike went forth smiling to the gale he looked round. John had the baby sitting on the edge of his desk, one hand about her, the other holding before her delighted eyes the golden figure of Pan.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV

The Dogs of Garre

Julius was met by his employer the next morning with a cryptic greeting. Mr. Bellamy was never his brightest in the early hours, and he usually worked off his spleen by a shower of fault-finding.

"Don't let my dogs see you," said Abe. "You'd make less than a square meal for them."

Julius was interested in spite of his unease. There were no dogs in the castle, for Abe was not a lover of pets. His employer explained. "I've bought a couple of police dogs," he said, "and they'll go on duty in the hall and corridor from tonight on. If you take my advice, you'll stay in your room until I'm up."

Later, Julius saw the dogs—dour, unfriendly, and wolf-like. In their strange new home they were unapproachable except by Abe himself. He was absolutely fearless, and the animals seemed to recognise immediately and to acknowledge his mastership.

"Handle 'em," said Abe. "Don't be afraid. Touch 'em."

Julius put forth a nervous hand at the nearest beast, and jumped back in a fright as the dog snapped at him.

"You're scared, and he knows you're scared. Come here, you!" He snapped his finger, and the dog lurched forward, wagging his tail, and sat down, his intelligent head lifted to the big man's face.

"The man who sold 'em to me said I wouldn't master 'em in a month. He's a fool. That house has been rented," he said, going off at a tangent. "What do you call it?"

"Do you mean Lady's Manor?" asked Julius in surprise.

The old man nodded.

"They beat me to it by five minutes. I was on the 'phone to the agent this morning and he told me he'd hired it. Do you know anything about that?"

Digitized by Google

"No, sir; this is the first I've heard. Who is the newcomer?"

Abe Bellamy shook his head.

"I don't know and I don't care," he said. "Why couldn't they go somewhere else?"

Later in the afternoon Julius accompanied him across the broad, tree-studded path on a tour of inspection.

"I guess that's the place," said Bellamy, pointing with his stick to a squat, grey house, the roof and chimneys of which showed over the high wall which surrounded the park. "I've seen the house before, but I never thought of buying it. Is that a door in the wall?"

"It looks like one," said Julius. "There was probably a connection between the castle and Lady's Manor. It was what they call a dower-house."

The door proved to be an ancient, iron-studded structure that evidently had not been used for years. Its ironwork was rusted, and the surface was half covered with ivy. The fact that it would mean a day's work to open the door did not satisfy the old man.

"Have a mason in from the village and fill up that doorway," he said. "I'll not risk prying people wandering about my land. See to that, Savini."

Julius made a note, and that same afternoon two workmen came from the village and began clearing away the ivy and the weeds preparatory to bricking up the doorway; and when Valerie Howett, viewing the rank garden of her new home, heard the click of steel against stone, she guessed what was happening on the other side of the dilapidated gate.

In many ways Lady's Manor had been a surprise. A more careful scrutiny had revealed the fact that very little interior repair was necessary. The walls of every room were panelled, the ceilings were raftered and needed no more than a coat of whitewash. One of the inlaid floors was badly in need of repair, but to her joy Valerie found that it was possible to move into the place almost at once, and this was a step which she decided to take.

The obedient Mr. Howett agreed, and before the cleaners

Digitized by Google

were out of the house, or the wash on the ceiling dry, huge furniture lorries passed in procession through the quiet lanes of Berkshire and backed into the drive of Lady's Manor.

From his bedroom window Abe Bellamy one morning saw smoke rising above the trees in the direction of the house and grunted. He was up earlier in these days, because the servants showed a pardonable reluctance to entering the living part of the castle until the watchful police dogs were leashed. These guardians of the night ranged the castle at large, and Julius once heard the soft patter of their feet in the night and shivered. And the presence of dogs had been effective, for since their arrival there had been no sign of the Green Archer.

Mr. Bellamy caught a glimpse of a headline in the *Daily Globe:*

POLICE DOGS GUARD THE CHICAGO MILLIONAIRE FROM A GHOSTLY ARCHER

and growled angrily. But he had resigned himself to this undesirable publicity; and although he bore a grudge against Spike Holland, he did not feel called upon to wage a vendetta against the reporter, though in the past he had ruined newspaper men for less. And on top of this, Spike Holland had the audacity to appear at the lodge of the castle and demand admission. This was the day following his return from Belgium.

"Tell him," snapped Abe Bellamy over the telephone, "that if he comes anywhere near I'll set my dogs on him."

'He says he has some information about Creager, the man who was murdered the other day."

"I don't want to know it," roared Bellamy, and slammed down the telephone.

A little while later, going into the grounds on one of his restless excursions, he stood stock still, momentarily paralysed with wrath and astonishment. The red-haired reporter was walking calmly across the green, a cigar in the corner of his mouth, his hands in his pockets. One of these he

Digitized by Google

removed to wave a cheerful greeting to the dumbfounded millionaire.

"How did you get here?"

"Over the wall," said Spike brightly.

Abe Bellamy's red face went a shade darker.

"You can go over the wall again," he said harshly. "You've no right here, you scum. Get!"

"See here, Mr. Bellamy. There's no sense in making a fuss. I'm here, and you might as well listen to me."

"Listen nothing. Get out!"

The old man came toward the reporter, and there was no doubt as to his intentions.

"I think you'd better listen," said Spike quietly and not budging an inch. "The police have found a copy of a letter that Creager wrote to you about a man called Z., and they are mighty anxious to know the year it was written in and who was the man."

Instantly Bellamy's attitude changed.

"A letter?" he said incredulously. "Written to me? Did the fool—did he keep copies of his letters?"

Spike nodded.

"They found hundreds of copies in his bureau. I guess it was a practice of his."

Abe Bellamy thought awhile. Then:

"Come inside," he said gruffly, and Spike followed him, triumphant.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV

The Gas Bill

"Now, let's hear all about this. How do you know about the letter, anyway?"

"I was there when it was found," said Spike. "In fact, they'd have passed it over if I hadn't seen it."

"They would, would they?" said the old man grimly.

"I saw it and made a copy before the inspector realised it was anything important."

He took out a pocket-book and extracted a sheet of paper, which he opened and laid on the table.

"I'll read it to you," he said. "There's no date, a fact that has rattled the police.

" 'Mr. Abe Bellamy,

" 'Re the man Z. He is in my ward, and he is a very quick-tempered fellow. I think I could do what you suggested at our meeting, but you would have to pay me well, because I might lose my job. Especially if anything went wrong and another warder saw me. Also, it might be very painful for me and I might seriously injure myself, and I must know where I stand financially. I don't like Z. He is too smart and ready with his tongue, and there has already been a little trouble with him. If you want to go ahead with this, will you see me tomorrow? I am going on my holidays and shall be staying with relations at Henley. If it is convenient, perhaps you could see me there.

" '(*Signed*) J. Creager.' "

Abe Bellamy read the letter twice, then folded it up and handed it back to the reporter.

"I don't remember receiving it. I know nothing whatever about Z., whoever he may be, and I never paid him money except for the service he rendered me."

Digitized by Google

His tone was unusually mild, though Spike saw that it was only with an effort that he was keeping his temper.

"But it was at Henley he saved your life, wasn't it?" Spike persisted. "It is rather a coincidence he should have fixed it for you to meet him there. Maybe he knew you were going to fall into the river?"

"I want none of that fresh talk, Holland," exploded the old man. "You have all the information you'll get from me. As to this letter, there's no proof that he ever sent it. Maybe you faked it and put it amongst his papers. What were you doing at the search, anyway?"

Spike folded the letter and put it back in his pocket.

"What was I doing?" he repeated. "Well, I guess I was just around. You've nothing to say to this letter, Mr. Bellamy?"

"Nothing. I never received it. I know nothing whatever about the man he mentions. I did not even know that Creager was a prison guard until I read it in the *Globe*—my favourite newspaper," he added sardonically, and Spike grinned.

"Well, that's that," he said. "Any more news of the ghost?"

"You get it before I do," replied Abe. "All the information I have about that darned Green Archer I read in the *Globe*—a very fine newspaper, full of accurate information. Say, I'd rather go without my breakfast than the *Daily Globe*."

"I suppose you don't mind my looking over the castle?"

"You suppose wrong," said Abe. "You can look over the wall you came across, and the sooner you look the better."

To be perfectly sure that his unwelcome visitor had gone, he accompanied him to the lodge gates, and the lodge-keeper's jaw fell at the sight of him.

"These walls are not high enough, Savini," said the old man after Spike had departed. "'Phone somebody in Guildford to come along and fix barbed wire on the top. And, Savini——"

Julius turned at the door.

Digitized by Google

"I didn't mention this before, but I think it will save you a lot of trouble if I tell you now that a leather folder of mine, where I keep a few photographs, is no longer in the drawer of my desk; I've put it in the safe. If you want to look at 'em, maybe you'll come along and ask me and I'll get 'em out for ye!"

Julius did not feel called upon to reply, and was incapable of making any adequate response, even if he had had the opportunity.

Garre Castle had undergone considerable renovation before Abe Bellamy had taken up his residence. Under the personal supervision of the old builder, gangs of men had spent the greater part of a month carrying out the work which he himself had planned. He was his own architect, his own ganger. He had introduced a new water-supply and had electric light introduced into the castle and a system of gas radiation. There were gas fires in every room except the library and a great range in the kitchen.

This gas-supply was the cause of considerable perturbation in the mind of Wilks, the butler, on the day Spike had made his unauthorised entrance to the castle grounds. The household accounts went to Bellamy direct, but by some accident there came to Mr. Wilks' pantry and office the gas bill for the summer quarter, and he pondered on it for a long time before he interviewed his master.

"What is it?" asked Abe, scowling up at his servitor.

"This gas bill, sir, is wrong; they have overcharged us," said Wilks, gratified that he was able to approach the lord of Garre on a matter in which he knew he would welcome instruction.

"Wrong? What's wrong with it?"

"Well, sir, they've sent us a heavy bill for one of the hottest months of the year, when the gas range in the kitchen was out of order and we had to use coal.

Bellamy snatched the bill from the man's hand without looking at it.

"Leave it," he said.

"But we couldn't have used a thousand feet of gas, and they've charged us——"

Digitized by Google

"Leave it!" thundered his employer. "And don't open the bills—see? That's not your job."

It was the last straw. Mr. Wilks was well paid, but he had suffered much at the hands of this boorish boss of his, and his patience was exhausted.

"I'm not going to have you talk to me that way, Mr. Bellamy," he said, "and I'll be glad if you'll give me my wages and let me go. I'm not used to——"

"Don't make speeches—go," said Abe.

He put his hand in his pocket and flung a note on the table.

"There's your money. You'll be out of this place in half an hour, or I'll know the reason why."

Spike was taking a modest lunch at the village inn when the tremendous news reached him. The dismissal of the castle butler was, to the village of Garre, an event of world-shaking importance. It was well known that relations were somewhat strained between Abe Bellamy and the chief of his domestic staff, and when Mr. Wilks appeared in the village street he was stopped every dozen yards by sympathisers of all ranks, ranging from the local doctor to one of his late staff who had been scared from the castle by the Green Archer.

The reporter left his lunch and went out to intercept the injured man.

"It was absolutely impossible to live with him," said Wilks, trembling with annoyance; "quite impossible, sir. He's not a human being, he's a pig! And what with his seeing ghosts——"

"Have you seen the ghost?"

"No, sir, I haven't," said Wilks. "I cannot tell a lie; I have seen no ghosts whatever, and my own opinion is that the ghost is an invention of Mr. Bellamy's for his own vile purpose. When I call him a pig, I am speaking as a man who has served in some of the best families. He doesn't know how to live, sir! He's got one of the handsomest dining-rooms in the country, and he takes his meals hog fashion in his library, which no gentleman ever does. And the meals he eats, sir! They would feed three regular

Digitized by Google

people. He has two quarts of milk for breakfast, half a dozen eggs . . ." He enumerated Mr. Bellamy's prodigious appetite.

He presented Mr. Bellamy in a new light to Spike. He never thought of him as a person who ate or drank or possessed the normal appetites of humanity.

"What was the trouble that led to your leaving?" he asked, and the butler told him.

No gas whatever had been used during the summer quarter, and the company had charged for twenty-five thousand feet.

"It was in his own interests I told him, and instead of being grateful, as a gentleman should be, he turned round and treated me like a dog. Well, naturally, Mr. Holland, I wasn't going to stand for that."

Spike listened to the recital of the butler's woes, but gave little thought to the question of the gas company's overcharge. Instead, he skillfully directed the conversation back to the question of the ghostly visitor, without, however, eliciting anything very startling except the presence of the police dogs, which Spike knew about and had already written up.

Nevertheless, all the time Mr. Wilks was talking he was furnishing a London newspaper with an interesting column which would eventually appear under the heading: "My Life in the Haunted Castle."

Spike, going back to town, decided to call at Scotland Yard. Jim Featherstone was in, and the reporter was admitted immediately.

"Well, Holland, what's the news?"

He pushed the cigar-box across the table, and Spike chose with great care.

"There's trouble in Garre Castle," he said. "The noble owner has fired the butler for butting in about the gas bill. I suppose four hundred years ago poor old Wilks would have been slung up by the neck and would have joined the goodly company of ghosts that gather at night to shoot craps in Abe's backyard."

"Say that all over again, and very slowly," said Jim. "I

Digitized by Google

am rather dense this morning. First of all, what was wrong with the gas bill?"

Spike told him, and to his astonishment the detective pressed him for details, questioning and requestioning until the reporter's brain reeled.

"What's wrong with the gas, anyway?" he said. "That doesn't seem to me to be much of a clue, unless you suspect Abe of running a secret whiskey still."

"The gas bill is the most important thing we've learned from Garre Castle," said Jim Featherstone quietly. "I'm greatly obliged to you, Holland. And, by the way, I'm going abroad for a week or two, so I shan't be seeing you. But any information you get I'd be glad if you would tell my assistant. I'll introduce you."

Spike came into the news editor's room half an hour later.

"Mr. Syme, I'm certain that the big end of this Creager's story is to be found in Garre Castle. The old man has just fired his butler, and we ought to get one of our men into his place right away. I'd go myself, but I've never buttled, and Bellamy would recognise my looks before I'd been there an hour. Can't we send Mason or one of the other boys? We could fix it so that an employment agency sent him down."

"It is an idea," said the news editor.

It was also an idea which occurred to two other interested persons, almost simultaneously.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI

The Dogs Hear a Noise

"Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown."

Abe Bellamy read the report of the inquest upon Creager without emotion. It meant no more to him than that the sum of four hundred and eighty pounds a year, which he had paid for many years, would now be saved to his pocket. It had been inconvenient and irritating to answer the interminable questions which the police had put to him regarding his acquaintance with the dead man; but that was all done with.

It is a curious fact that the bizarre character of the man's death did not stir him. Nor did he himself associate the method of killing with the Green Archer. He was constitutionally prejudiced against newspapers, and from the first he looked upon the bringing together of the two circumstances as a stunt invented by journalists. Very likely the man wasn't killed with an arrow at all. He was probably stabbed by some old lag who had a grudge against him; and if it was an arrow, then the murderer must have got his idea for a weapon out of the newspapers.

One thing he had noticed—and this had nothing whatever to do with the murder—was the gloom of his secretary. He attributed this wrongly to the revelation he had made that he knew Julius and his past, and, believing this, was content to keep him in his employ. The presence of the new tenants of Lady's Manor caused him a little annoyance. They seemed in some indefinable way to encroach upon his majesty, though he did not exactly put the thought into those words. Who they were he neither knew nor cared. Except to Julius he never discussed outside matters, and his servants did not address him unless he spoke to them, and he never spoke except to complain.

Digitized by Google

A few days after the dismissal of Wilks he had occasion to snap at the new butler.

"Young fellow, I want you to understand that I don't wish you to come to any room where I am, unless I send for you. You were knocking at the door of the library last night, though Mr. Savini told you that I was not to be disturbed."

"I'm very sorry, sir," said the butler deferentially. "The ways of the castle are strange to me as yet, but I will not offend again."

The new butler's arrival seemed to have had the effect of depressing Julius Savini even further. At any rate, there was a marked change in his demeanour from the day the new man arrived. He was less "chatty," less buoyant. Abe found him wandering in the grounds one afternoon in a state of complete dejection.

"What's the matter with you, Savini?" he snarled. "If there's any grouching to be done in this place, I'll do it. Spruce up and get a little more zip into your system. What is the matter, anyway? Have the police found you out?"

"No, sir," said Julius. "I'm not feeling very well."

"Then find another job," growled the old man. "I'm not running a sanatorium."

This admonition had the effect of producing a spurious liveliness in the Eurasian, which had its sequel in the old man cursing him heartily.

More than a fortnight had passed since the last appearance of the Green Archer, and Bellamy had no difficulty in finding an explanation.

"There's something about a police dog that a ghost doesn't like," he said. "Or maybe there's something about a ghost that naturally riles a police dog."

That night he was awakened from his sleep by the deep growl of one of the hounds, and, jumping out of bed, he came into the corridor. The lights were all on, as he had ordered, and one of the dogs stood stiffly in the center of the passage, facing the broad stone stairway which led to the hall below. The old man whistled, and the dog turned and walked slowly toward him, stopping to look back from

Digitized by Google

time to time. Presently he was joined by his companion, who came bounding up the stairs at the sound of the whistle.

"What's wrong with ye, eh?"

Abe went back into his room, put on his dressing-gown, and slipped a gun into his pocket. Then, followed by the dogs, he descended to the hall. He saw nothing that was in any degree suspicious. Unlocking the library door, he walked in, switched on the lights, and made a search of the room without result. The big, heavy entrance-door was locked and barred.

Satisfied, he went upstairs again to his room. He had scarcely dozed off when again came the deep-throated growl, and this time from both dogs. He found them where he had seen them before. They stood, rigidly pointing toward the main staircase, and this time when he whistled them one looked round but did not move. He called them sharply, and they came to him.

"What's the matter with you, you fool?"

A deep growl was the reply. Suddenly, as though they had seen something, they lashed round together and flew like the wind along the corridor, with Abe in pursuit.

He found them in the hall, nosing the floor, and this time he turned on all the lights in the hall and made a search, but again without result.

"You dogs are nutty," he grumbled.

They were uneasy. Probably dogs had spells like these, he thought, and went to bed. As he was dozing off he heard them growl again, but took no further notice and went to sleep.

It was five o'clock when he awoke, and it was still dark. He got up and pulled on his dressing-gown before he illuminated the room. And then his eyes opened wider. The door was wide open, the outer door unlocked, and he was certain that he had closed and fastened them when he came to bed for the last time. What had the dogs been doing?

He went into the corridor to discover. At first he thought they were dead, but they were lying, one behind the other, against the wall, their legs outstretched. He shook one, and

Digitized by Google

the dog opened his eyes, looked at him stupidly for a second or two, and closed them again.

Doped! thought the old man. So there had been something hidden all the time; but it was something human. The Green Archer was flesh and blood; he had never thought anything else.

The dogs recovered in half an hour and seemed none the worse for their misadventure. He himself took them down to the kennels.

Why had the Green Archer come? What had been his object? It was not for the sake of demonstrating his ability to come in and out of the room at his will that he had taken the risk attendant upon drugging the dogs. What had he been seeking? The bedroom contained few valuables, and what there were had been left intact. Robbery was not, obviously, the explanation for these visits. It was equally certain that the Green Archer was no practical joker, but had a very serious purpose.

Suddenly the explanation flashed on the old man. The Green Archer was seeking the key—the key that never left him by day and that was beneath his pillow by night. He carried it in his pocket at the end of a long steel chain. The first thing he did in the morning was to take it out and loop the chain about his neck when he went to his bath. The last thing he did at night was to return the key to his pillow.

It was a curious instrument—very long and very narrow and thin. The key! That was the explanation. And if it was that, then the Green Archer knew the secret of Garre Castle!

He almost ran into the library and slammed the door behind him. Savini, hearing the sound half awake, dreamt that the old man had shot himself, and smiled in his sleep.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII

At Lady's Manor

Going down to the village post office, Julius Savini saw a familiar figure on the sidewalk, and groaned inwardly. If there had been a convenient street into which he could have turned, or if he could have pretended that he had not seen the dapper, red-haired young man smoking his morning cigar and surveying the world with a benignant and proprietorial eye, he would most certainly have done so. But Spike beckoned him, and in a sweat the Eurasian crossed the street.

"I am——" he began.

"You're in a hurry. I know that. You don't want the old man to see you talking to me, or you'll lose your job. That's pretty well known too. Say, Julius, I feel we ought to know one another better, so I hope you don't mind my calling you by your given name? It has always been a favourite of mine. . . . No, I'm not kidding. . . . I shall name my first child 'Julius.' But listen. I want to ask you something. Do you know a man at Scotland Yard called Featherstone?"

Savini nodded.

"I know him, yes," he said shortly. "He's the man that used to go around with the Howetts. Why don't you go and see Mr. Howett, Spike? He's staying at Lady's Manor, and he'll give you a real story."

"I've seen him," said Spike. "You know Featherstone, eh?"

"I've told you so, haven't I?" said Julius impatiently. "Now I must be getting along, Holland."

"Call me Spike," begged the young man earnestly. "Honestly, I feel we ought to be better acquainted. What's the new butler like?" he asked carelessly.

Julius shrugged his shoulders.

Digitized by Google

"He's a butler—a capable man. He was sent down from London."

"Just a capable butler, eh? That certainly sounds unromantic," said Spike, eyeing him keenly. "Does he ever come into the village?"

"I suppose so."

"He isn't anybody you know, is he?"

"What is the use of asking me questions about butlers?" pleaded Julius pathetically. "Is he a friend of yours?"

"What's the hurry?" said Spike, catching the Eurasian's arm as he tried to pass on. "Anything fresh? What's that Green Archer doing? Is he still on his vacation?"

"No, he's not," snapped Julius. "He doped the dogs last night. I'm going to the post office to wire for two more. The old man thinks the archer won't be able to handle four as easily as he handled two." And, wrenching himself away, he made off at full speed, anxious to put as great a distance between the inquisitorial Spike and himself as was possible.

Spike had had a letter from his friend in Belgium that morning. John Wood was coming over at the end of the week and he wanted Spike to dine with him. One portion of his letter interested the reporter:

> "I was very grateful to you for the long account you sent me of Bellamy and the extraordinary happenings at the castle. Since then I have had the *Globe* and read your account, and the story of the Green Archer of Garre is very remarkable. In your covering letter you say that the Green Archer will sooner or later break the nerve of Abel Bellamy. As I told you before, you are wrong. Nothing in the world is going to frighten this evil man. Nor do I agree that it is inevitable that Abe Bellamy will be killed by the hand that struck down Creager. I think it is largely a matter of expediency with the destroyer, and Abe Bellamy's fate depends entirely upon the nature of the discoveries which are made by the man who is 'haunting' the castle."

Digitized by Google

The letter went on to deal in detail with his new scheme and its progress. He had succeeded in interesting a number of wealthy men in America and England, and his plan had progressed beyond his wildest hopes. Spike did not read the latter part of the letter very carefully, because for the moment he was not passionately interested in child welfare. He was, however, immensely interested in Abe Bellamy. He could not help wondering at the extraordinary difference in the character of the two men. This brutal giant, who sat like an ogre of old time in his fastness, emanating uncharity and hate, with the gentle soul whose life's work was devoted to the interests of humanity.

He had a breakfast engagement with Mr. Howett, and he strolled along the pretty lane that skirted the high walls of the castle. Presently the Elizabethan chimneys of the old manor-house came into view.

Spike was something of an antiquarian, and, like most Americans, was better acquainted with the history of the historic buildings of England than the Englishmen who saw them every day. The manor-house had been built in the fifteenth century for a certain Isabel D'Isle, well beloved of a de Curcy. It had been partially destroyed by fire in the days of Elizabeth and immediately rebuilt, a fact which accounted for the Elizabethan character of the architecture.

The morning was bright, and, for the time of year, warm, and he found Valerie Howett in the garden superintending the planting of bulbs.

"It looks as though you've settled down here forever," smiled Spike as he shook hands.

"I am settled here—for a long time," she said quietly. "You will find father in his library. I am afraid you will think the house rather muddled, Mr. Holland, but father's room is the most tidy of all."

Something of the melancholy which seemed to be a settled characteristic of Mr. Howett had disappeared. He was bright, almost cheerful, and Spike, not knowing the cause, thought it was the change of air, until his host revealed his plans, showed him with some pride the papers he had

Digitized by Google

accumulated, and even consulted him about the introductory chapter.

"Have you seen anything of your neighbour, Mr. Howett?"

"Who is that? Bellamy?" Mr. Howett made a wry face. "No, and I don't want to see much of him either. Thank Heaven he's rather an unsociable man and he's not likely to be calling for tea! Holland," he added earnestly, "have you ever got into this tea habit of ours? If you haven't, don't; it's fatal. It is worse than drugs. Once you get the habit, you're a slave forever."

The grounds of Lady's Manor were not very extensive. There were little less than two acres, and their boundaries were marked by the castle wall. This Spike saw after breakfast, when the girl was showing him round.

"There seems to be a door here, Miss Howett."

"There was," she said ruefully, "but Mr. Bellamy has filled up the doorway on the other side."

"Maybe he's afraid of the Green Archer," said Spike humorously, and quickly added: "I hope that is not an indiscretion, Miss Howett. You're not scared, are you?"

"No, I'm not afraid," she answered.

Spike surveyed the wall with a professional interest.

"It is lower here than anywhere else round the castle," he said, "and you'd have all the opportunity you wanted if you were inclined to make an excursion into Abe's feudal domain."

He went forward and put up his hands and could touch the top of the wall.

"Two light ladders, and there you are. Gee! I'm beginning to envy you, Miss Howett. I'm not going to ask you to let me burgle the castle from your backyard, but if you gave me any encouragement I'd come along one dark night and go look for that archer!"

She laughed softly.

"I shall give you no encouragement, Mr. Holland," she said. And then: "Have you seen Captain Featherstone lately?"

"No, not since Monday last. He told me he was going

Digitized by Google

abroad, though I doubted that. Honestly, Miss Howett, I had an idea that he was the new butler at the castle. I know he's very interested in Bellamy, especially in the gas bill; though why the gas bill, Heaven knows!"

"What is that?" she asked quickly, and Spike retailed the domestic gossip of Garre.

"I told Featherstone that they'd fired the butler, and it occurred to me later that he might have applied for the job. These secret service men make real good butlers; some of them make nothing else. To tell you the truth, I had an idea of sending one of our men there, but by the time our city editor had considered the matter and had taken legal advice and had examined his soul in the silence of the night and prayed for spiritual guidance, the job had been filled. Thinking it over, I decided that the new butler was Featherstone. For one thing, they say he's a good-looker, and for another he never comes into the village to give us a chance of seeing him. But I spoke to Julius this morning, and I guess Julius has a streaky past, and there are few officers of the law he isn't acquainted with. If the butler had been Featherstone he'd have squealed to the old man."

She was thinking.

"Then Captain Featherstone was impressed by the gas bill?"

Spike nodded.

"Maybe he's a family man," he said lightly. "Being a bachelor, the tragedy of the gas bill has never appealed to me."

"Captain Featherstone is not married," she said a little coldly, and went crimson when Spike apologised for his mistake.

"I don't know why you should apologise," she said with some asperity. "I'm just telling you that he isn't married. Do you know Julius Savini?" she said, turning the conversation. "Can you tell me anything about him?"

"Why, no, said Spike in surprise, "except that he's a Eurasian. His father was an Englishman, his mother was an Indian woman, and I should imagine that Julius has the weaknesses of both. He used to run with the Crowley gang,

Digitized by Google

though I have never known whether he was victim or directing genius. The police broke the gang over a year ago, and somehow Julius crept outside of the net, so maybe he was a victim, or," he added, "a stool pigeon. I used to think it strange that he was in Bellamy's employ, until I began to give it thought, and then I realised that Julius was the type that would suit the old man admirably. He was born a toady, he is utterly unscrupulous, and he's frightened for his life of Bellamy. His head's chock-full of stunt schemes for getting rich quick, but he has neither the stamina nor the grit to carry them out. That is Julius. I trust I am not doing him an injustice," he added hopefully.

"I don't think you are," said Valerie.

Spike had taken up his quarters at Garre indefinitely. Twice a day he was in telephonic communication with the office; and although Mr. Syme hinted that the Green Archer, as an excuse for loafing, had almost outlived its usefulness, he would not take the responsibility of bringing his subordinate back to town.

Spike was speaking to the office that afternoon when he saw Valerie drive past in her car, taking the London road. The telephone at the Blue Boar was in the hall—a somewhat embarrassing circumstance for a man who wished to carry on a private conversation, for it was within earshot of the bar.

He walked to the door and looked after her, and then a thought struck him, and he came back to the telephone and called the office again. In a quarter of an hour he was connected, which was fairly rapid for that particular branch.

"Is that you, Mr. Syme? Miss Howett has gone to London. Do any of our boys know her? I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to pick her up. Not for publication, you understand, but to give me a line?"

"Is she a line to the Green Archer?" asked Mr. Syme's voice sarcastically.

"She's not only one line, but the big four," was the reply.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII

At El Moro's

Fay Clayton lived a solitary but not exactly a lonely life. The terms in her case were not synonymous. In her little flat in Maida Vale she was more or less of a recluse, but she had a host of friends and many *venues* where she could find recreation and amusement. It would not be true to say that she missed Julius. To her husband she gave an affection which none shared. She never had occasion to question his loyalty, and certainly during the past few months her financial position had been considerably improved.

In the days when Julius ran with the crowd and was one of the four smart young men who rooked the simple and the too-sure, life had been a precarious existence. There were whole weeks when they had lived on borrowed money and on pawned jewellery, and even the fat days had not been too fat. Now, however, she was receiving a steady and unexpectedly large allowance. She never troubled to ask her husband where the money came from. That Abe Bellamy did not pay him an extravagant salary she was aware. In fact, she knew exactly the wage that Julius received.

He was getting money "on the side," and it was safe, because Julius was notoriously a shirker of risks. He had never told her what his duties were, and, speculating upon his wealth, she decided that in his capacity as secretary h must have the handling of the housekeeping money, whic would account to some extent for his affluence. Not only was he able to give her a handsome allowance, but there had come unexpected bonuses in the shape of pieces of jewellery, obviously new and obviously respectably purchased. She had no qualms. Julius was safe, and she could flash her new diamond ring in her favourite night-club without feeling the slightest trepidation that mysterious strangers

Digitized by Google

would appear and request her to take a little walk to the police station.

Even that would have had few terrors for Fay Clayton. She had been in prison three times since she was fifteen, and the real terror of gaol, which is the terror of the unknown, had ceased to influence her. The only inconvenience of imprisonment was that it brought you into contact with the police, gave them the right to stop and talk to you and ask you questions which it was sometimes inconvenient to answer.

She was in her little kitchen ironing a blouse when there came a knock at the door. Her maid (a euphonious title for the untidy woman who came in daily to clean the flat) was out on her morning shopping excursion, and Fay went to the door and opened it, expecting to see a tradesman's boy. Instead, she met the gaze of a gaunt, hollow-eyed man, wearing an ill-fitting suit, the creases in which would have been eloquent to the initiated.

"Why, Jerry!" she said, opening the door wider. "Come right in."

She closed the door behind him, and he followed her into her sitting-room.

"When did you come out?"

"This morning," he said. "Have you got a drink? I'm dying for one. Where's Julius?"

She brought a bottle from the cupboard and a soda siphon, set it before him, and he poured himself out a liberal dose.

"That's fine," he said, smacking his lips, and the colour came into his pallid face. "Where's Julius?"

"He's not around, Jerry. He's got a job in the country."

He nodded and looked inquiringly at the bottle.

"You'll have no more of that," she said, putting the whisky back in the cupboard and locking it decisively. "What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. I suppose the crowd are all scattered? Julius in a job, eh? Is he going straight?"

"Certainly he's going straight," said Fay indignantly.

Digitized by Google

"And, Jerry, you've got to find work too. The gang is broken up. Let it stay broken."

They were brother and sister, though none would guess the relationship between the pretty girl and the hollow-faced gaol-bird.

"I saw that copper Featherstone."

"Did he see you coming here?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"No, I met him up west. He stopped and asked me how I was and what I was going to do. He's not a bad fellow, that."

She made a little face.

"You're entitled to any illusion that comes into your head, Jerry. What are you going to do?" she asked again.

"I don't know." He pushed his chair back and looked thoughtfully down at the table-cover. "There's a crowd that's working the Atlantic boats that want me to come in with them. I've never done such work, and it will require a bit of capital—it costs a hundred for the return fare—and there's always the chance of making a voyage without meeting a single mug. I suppose you couldn't lend me the money?"

She bit her lip in thought.

"I could," she said slowly.

"I'm certain to make it pay," he said; "and it is safer. You never hear of a ship's crowd being pinched." He looked round the room. "It's good to be back. I'm tired of prison."

"Where were you, Jerry?"

"I've been in Pentonville, the place that man Creager used to be. I could tell you a few stories about him that'd make your hair stand up, Fay. I suppose I can stay here?"

She hesitated.

"Yes, you can have Julius' room."

"Doesn't he come here?" he asked with a frown.

"He can't. I hear from him every other day, and I'm not complaining."

He looked at his creased clothes with an expression of disgust.

Digitized by Google

"I shall want a new outfit. How are you off for money?"

"I can arrange that for you," she said. "You can't go out like that, Jerry. I hope nobody saw you come in. The people who own these apartments are very particular, and I don't want them to see you until you look a little more presentable. I thought they wouldn't let you out for another six months."

He laughed.

"The prison doctor got me out," he said. "My chest is bad, and I asked for special treatment, so they remitted a part of the sentence. They don't want sick people in prison. I've got some clothes in the cloakroom at Charing Cross Station," he said suddenly. "Perhaps, if you got those for me, I shouldn't want very much in the way of extras."

She took the slip from him. That afternoon she went to the railway station to secure the trunk. Taking a short-cut, her taxi-man brought her through Fitzroy Square. It was a locality which was not unknown to Fay, for there was a restaurant which had served her well in the past. It was a place of little rooms, where people could gather, certain that they were free from observation, and discuss matters of considerable moment to themselves. It was a favourite rendezvous of the gang in its palmiest days.

A man was standing outside the entrance, and with a gasp she recognised him. It was Julius. While she was leaning forward to tap frantically on the glass a car drew up and a woman stepped out. She saw Julius raise his hat, and then the two disappeared through the narrow portals of El Moro. Fay stopped the cab and got out. She had seen Valerie Howett once before, and she knew her instantly.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIX

The Wife of Julius

Valerie looked round curiously at the ornate sitting-room into which she was ushered. A rank smell of stale cigar smoke pervaded the room; the tarnished gilding and decoration of the apartment, the heavy velvet curtains, the general air of tawdriness was unwholesome and sickening.

Julius Savini dismissed the smirking waiter and closed the door, sensing her *repugnancio*—a Portuguese word that came readily to his lips and which exactly described Valerie's emotions.

"I'm sorry to bring you here, Miss Howett, but it is the only place where I was certain we should be free from observation."

"What sort of a restaurant is this?" she asked curiously.

"It is very well known," said the tactful Julius. "Won't you sit down, Miss Howett? I'm afraid I haven't very much to tell you," he said, when she had seated herself on the edge of a plush-covered chair. "Mr. Bellamy is making it more and more difficult to discover anything."

"Did you get the photograph for me?"

He shook his head.

"When I went to take it I found the drawer empty. Bellamy must have found that I had been searching his desk, and he as good as told me so. I've taken a great many risks for you, Miss Howett."

"And I have paid you," she answered coldly. "I'm not quite sure, Mr. Savini, that all the risks have been taken for my sake or for the sake of the money I pay you. You have your own plans, of that I am sure, and you are working as much for yourself as for me. But that is not my business. I must have that photograph. You say there were others?"

Digitized by Google

"There was a portrait of his nephew," said Julius, and the girl's eyes opened.

"His nephew?" she said incredulously. "I didn't know he had any relations at all?"

"I only guess it is his nephew. He was killed in the war, anyway."

Fay Clayton had guessed that Julius had a profitable sideline, and in this she was not mistaken. Every scrap of information that Valerie Howett obtained of Bellamy's doings, of his acquaintances and movements, had come from the sleek Eurasian, and the girl's purse had been the goldmine from whence came Fay's enlarged income.

"There was nothing on the back of the lady's photograph —nothing to indicate whose picture it was? Oh, why didn't you take it when you had the opportunity?"

"I'm sorry I didn't," he said ruefully, "but if he'd found it gone he would have fired me out. I shudder to think what would have happened." And Julius did literally shudder.

"You said in your note that the Green Archer had been and had drugged the dogs."

"He went into Bellamy's room too," nodded Julius. "There's only one important piece of information I have for you, Miss Howett. The old man wrote to Smith this morning. He made me take the letter to the post office and register it. By the way, it was sealed, and from its weight I should think there was money in it. Smith has more than Creager had. About a hundred pounds a month I think the sum is. I know, because I had to draw a hundred last month from the bank, and that same night Mr. Bellamy came to me for money because he wanted to pay Wilks— that was the old butler—for something that he'd bought."

"Who is the new butler?" asked Valerie.

"I don't know him, miss. He's a very pleasant fellow, but I see very little of him."

Valerie thought awhile. She had made one unfortunate attempt to come into contact with the second of Bellamy's hirelings, and it had nearly ended disastrously. She was certain in her mind that through Coldharbour Smith lay

Digitized by Google

the solution to the mystery she was trying to unravel.

"I want to know more about that man," she said. "You have found nothing touching him?"

"Nothing. Bellamy has very few private papers, and those are in the safe. It would take an expert to open the door, and Mr. Bellamy keeps the key with him all the time. It is the one key he carries, and it never leaves him. I've been in his room in the morning before he has been up and I've never seen it, so I imagine he takes it to bed with him."

"Let me know at once if there is any fresh development. Mr. Bellamy is getting in some new dogs, you told me?" she said with a faint smile as she rose. "It will be easy to convey information now that I am at the Lady's Manor. A note thrown over the wall——"

There came from outside the sound of angry voices in altercation. Suddenly the door was flung violently open and a woman appeared. Her face was flushed, her eyes bright with fury, and it was some time before she could master her voice to speak to the astonished girl. Then:

"I'd like to know what you are doing here with my husband, Miss Howett?" she asked shrilly.

"Your husband?" said Valerie, looking from the woman to the wilting Julius.

"My dear, it is quite all right. I am seeing this lady on business," quavered Julius.

"On business, eh?" The woman stood with her hands on hips, surveying her agitated husband. "That's a fine story. You've come to talk business! Couldn't you talk to her at her hotel? What do you come sneaking here for——"

Valerie had recovered her self-possession now.

"Is this your wife, Mr. Savini?" she asked.

"Am I his wife?" sneered Fay. "Well, I should say I was! But you're the fellow who couldn't come and see me because you were so busy at Garre," she stormed. "You poor fool!"

"My dear, I can explain everything. I was coming straight on to see you—I swear I was. I had some business with Miss Howett—important business."

"And does Miss Howett come here alone to see you on

Digitized by Google

important business?" said the woman, lashing herself into a fury. "Does she come to a place like El Moro's without somebody to look after her? Of course she doesn't!"

"Of course she doesn't," said a cheery voice from the doorway. "Miss Howett came with me."

Fay Clayton spun round, and all the anger went out of her face, and her mouth opened in an "Oh!" of astonishment.

"We're always butting into one another, you and I, Fay," said Captain Featherstone gaily. And then, to the amazed Valerie: "I came up to ask you how much longer you'd be, Miss Howett. You haven't forgotten that you've an engagement at four?"

Valerie gathered up her furs and followed the detective down the stairs, feeling very foolish and very angry; and she was peculiarly feminine in that her anger was not directed either to Julius or his virago of a wife, but to the man who had made so timely an appearance.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX

A Warning

Jim Featherstone handed the girl into the car and followed her without invitation.

"There are some places where you can go, and others where I, your indulgent chaperon, cannot allow you to be seen, and El Moro's is one of those places. It is a house of call of the most undesirable type of criminal, and I shall have something to say to brother Julius, when I get him alone, for taking you there."

"It was my fault," she said. "I asked him to find a place where I should not be recognised and where we could be quite alone."

"May I suggest," he said, "that in the future you go to the top of St. Paul's Cathedral or in the Crypt of Westminster Abbey—both highly respectable places?" Then, in another tone: "Julius, of course, has been supplying you with information about Bellamy's household. I suspected that all along. I warn you, Miss Howett, that this man, though he will serve you up to a point more or less faithfully, will not hesitate to double-cross you. He has a game of his own——"

"I know that," she said quietly. And then: "I suppose you've been following me all day?"

"Most of the afternoon," he said.

"I thought you were abroad. Do you know, Captain Featherstone, you are getting on my nerves."

"You have been on my nerves for months," he answered calmly. "You don't imagine that I'm getting any pleasure out of chasing you all over London, do you?"

Instantly she was penitent.

"I'm—I'm very sorry," she said humbly. "But you have an extraordinary knack of making me feel foolish, and I suppose I resent that. I'm ever so grateful to you for com-

Digitized by Google

ing to me at that moment. It was more than a little embarrassing. Is she his wife?"

He nodded.

"I never inquire too closely into these mixed marriages," he said, "but from the almost childish pride which the excellent Fay has in displaying her wedding ring I should imagine that this is a genuine marriage. There is nothing in which the habitual criminal takes so much pride as in some respectable streak in his murky life."

"I thought you were abroad," she said again.

"You said that before. I am very sorry I'm not abroad. If I were following my natural bent I should be climbing the Tyrolean Alps," he said; and she did not know how untruthful this young man could be, for there was no place in the wide world he would have sooner been at that moment than by her side in the smooth-running Rolls that was carrying them through the busy West End.

Suddenly she uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"Oh, I forgot to ask him——" she began. "And that was one of the things I wanted to know."

"Perhaps I can tell you," he said, but she shook her head.

"You wouldn't be able to tell me what I want," she said, and he laughed.

"Some day you'll realise that as an information bureau I have no equal."

She hesitated a second and then opened her bag and took out a stout yellow package, which she unfolded carefully on her knees.

"I see. A plan of the castle," said Jim immediately.

"It is an old plan. I got it from a bookseller in Guildford. It is not the castle as it is today, but as it was two hundred years ago. You see, there are no living-rooms, and this place"—she pointed with her finger—"which is the library, is called the Hall of Justice."

He nodded.

"It was the place where the old de Curcys tried their prisoners," he said promptly. "And that"—he pointed—"which is now the entrance-hall of the castle, was the torture

Digitized by Google

chamber, where prisoners were induced to tell the truth. There are moments when I regret the abolition of torture rooms, for the crime which is most prevalent in England today is the crime of wilful perjury. Now, if we only had a few picturesque instruments of torture hanging above the witness-chair——"

"Please be serious," she said. "Are you sure that this is the library?"

"Perfectly sure. I have plans more modern than yours. I got them from the late owner of the property."

"Could you let me have them?" she asked eagerly.

"Why?"

"Well, because I want them."

It was not a particularly convincing argument, but to her surprise Captain Featherstone agreed.

"I'm giving you one piece of advice, my young friend," he said, "and it is this. Go, if you wish, to Limehouse and investigate Coldharbour Smith's little hell. Pay as many visits as you like to El Moro's, and I'll undertake that nothing beyond your reputation for intelligence shall be smirched. But do not try single-handed investigations at Garre Castle."

He spoke slowly and earnestly, and she could not mistake his seriousness.

"You'll never get in by ordinary methods. I want you to promise me that you'll try nothing extraordinary. Will you promise that?"

She considered awhile.

"No," she said frankly, "I cannot honestly promise that."

"But what do you expect to find?" he asked in despair. "Do you imagine old man Bellamy is leaving around written confessions for intruders to read? Do you suppose for one moment that, even if you got into the castle, you would make any tangible discovery? Leave it in my hands, Miss Howett. I'm afraid for you. I'll be perfectly truthful and tell you that. I'm afraid because I know something of this vicious man. I'm afraid because of the dogs that would show you no mercy. But most of all I fear the Green Archer."

Digitized by Google

She could not believe her ears.

"You are actually afraid of the Green Archer?" she said. "Surely, Captain Featherstone, you are joking?"

"I am afraid of the Green Archer," he repeated doggedly. "Valerie, you are blundering into the most terrible danger, danger that is no less awful because it is vague. I do not ask your confidence; I do not press you to tell me why you are seeking Mrs. Held, or what Mrs. Held is to you, or even the circumstances of her disappearance. In good time, perhaps, you will take me into your confidence. Your father said you would."

"He has told you nothing?"

Jim shook his head.

"Nothing. Will you promise me that you will not attempt to get into the castle?"

"I cannot promise that," she said. "I think you are exaggerating the danger, and perhaps you are under-estimating the importance of my search."

"Perhaps I am," he said after a pause. "I think I'll get down here, if you will be kind enough to stop your car."

It was in Whitehall that he got out. Not until he had left her did she begin to realise the character of the service he had rendered and was still rendering. He believed in the Green Archer! She smiled. She never expected that the Green Archer would make so extraordinary a convert to the occult.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXI

The New Docs

Julius Savini had a few poignant words to say to his wife before he left her. Julius, under the eye of Featherstone, and humiliated in the presence of Valerie Howett, was a different person from Julius alone with his partner.

"You've probably spoiled everything," he said. "Spoiled all the things I've been working for for years. You've as good as taken big money from my pocket."

"I'm very sorry. I didn't know that Featherstone was here, Julius," she pleaded, "and I got mad when I saw you and Miss Howett going into El Moro's together. Wouldn't you have felt the same?"

"I never get mad," said Julius truthfully.

"How did I know she was paying you?"

"Where did you think I got the money from?" he snapped.

It was very pleasant for a man of Julius Savini's temperament to have anybody at whom he could snarl.

"You don't suppose the old man gives me hundreds at a time, do you? It isn't that. I don't even mind if I never get another cent from her. But it's Featherstone knowing we're married——"

"He knew that all along," said Fay. "He as good as told me when I met him the other day in the park that he'd heard we were married. What does it matter? Are you ashamed?" she asked suspiciously.

"Don't be a fool!" said Julius, and rang for his bill.

To his relief she readily accepted his honest excuse that he had to return by an early train, and went with him to the railway station. She was half-way back to her flat when she realised that she had undertaken to get her brother's luggage from the cloakroom.

The train that carried Julius into Berkshire brought also

Digitized by Google

two ferocious-looking dogs, in charge of a kennel-man. Julius saw them on the platform of the little town which was nearest to Garre. They seemed a little more unfriendly than their predecessors, and one of them was muzzled.

"Are they for Mr. Bellamy?" he asked the man.

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "and I wish him joy of 'em, for these fellows are fiends!"

There was only one taxi at the station, and this Julius claimed. Though he was loth to do so, he invited the man in charge of the dogs to accompany him to Garre, and it was not a comfortable journey.

Once again Abe Bellamy demonstrated his extraordinary mastery over animals. The dogs seemed to respond to that which was brute in his nature, and when, immediately on their arrival, he unmuzzled the fiercer of the two and patted its tawny head, the great dog lay down at his feet. It was Abe who took them to the kennels without lead or whip, and they followed meekly at his heels and joined their fellows, submitting to the chain without so much as a bark. The old man seemed to find an unusual pleasure in his accomplishment, and walked back to the hall with Julius, who had followed him at a safe distance, almost facetious over his secretary's timidity.

"There's no real devil in you, Savini. That's what the dogs just hate. You are just poodle—one of those long-haired insects that these women carry around; these hounds are man-dogs."

He looked up at the frowning keep above his head, and his eyes kindled at the sight of the hanging beam.

"Those were the days, eh, Savini? If I'd lived five hundred years ago I could have set those dogs on to you, and by God I'd love to do it!"

He meant all he said. Even the mental picture of the terrified Eurasian fighting back those savage beasts afforded him a thrill of pleasure.

"But the police would come chasing me, I guess," he said with a sigh, " and I'd have to get up in the witness-stand and lie. There's too much law nowadays, Savini. And what is law? It is something made by weaklings to protect weak-

Digitized by Google

lings. Men who can't fight for themselves ought to die. I read in the *Globe* about a fellow in Belgium who's got a baby home and an institution for treating sick children. What does he want to cure the sick for? It's just patching up useless citizens and encouraging the cunning to beat the strong."

Julius agreed. He found it less wearing to agree than disagree with the man who paid him. On this occasion he could agree with greater readiness because he also thought that money spent by the American engineer might be put to a better use than bringing up uninteresting babies. To Julius, philanthropy in any of its aspects was foolishness. The type of mind that found pleasure in giving without any hope of receiving an adequate return was beyond his comprehension.

"I heard about this fellow from my lawyer," said Abe, to Savini's surprise. "There was a . . . fellow I knew that was . . . killed in the war." For a second the spectre of a smile hovered about his gross lips, as though he found something amusing in the tragedy. "A fool airman—yuh. This Wood was a friend of his, and after the war produced a will or sump'n that gave him all this . . . this . . . well, he was a relation of mine . . . gave him all his property. It wasn't much," he added with satisfaction.

Julius knew that he was talking about his dead nephew; he guessed the original of the photograph in the leather folder had stood in that relationship.

"That's how I know him. He's not a friend of mine. I'll bet he's making money out of that baby stunt of his. All these holy guys get a bit on the side."

This was a pet theory of Abe Bellamy's, and he was not alone in his illusion that pure altruism is a quality that exists only in the imagination of fools.

He did not turn into the hall, but continued past the open door, his hands behind him, and Savini walked with him, knowing that he would probably be cursed for intruding on the old man's solitude if he stayed, and be bullied if he offered an excuse for leaving.

"I've had that water-gate fixed," said Bellamy, at last,

Digitized by Google

and Julius heaved a sigh of relief at the discovery that he was expected to be present.

"I can't exactly settle in my mind how that green spook gets into the castle, but the water-gate seems the only way."

They came at last to the great iron grille, which had now been backed with stout wooden planks. Over the spiked gateway barbed wire had been strung.

"If he comes this way he'll come no more," said Abe, "though how in thunder he can find a way into Garre, even if he makes the courtyard, is a puzzle to me."

"Possibly he gets into the castle during the daytime and hides himself," suggested Julius.

"Don't be a fool! Every room is searched before sunset —you know that. No; he has a way in that we haven't discovered."

Supposing that the Green Archer was human (and here the superstitious Julius had his doubts), it was little short of miraculous that he could come and go at his will. There were only two sets of windows overlooking the grounds, those in the unused dining-room, which were narrow and covered at night with steel shutters, and Mr. Bellamy's bedroom, which were well out of reach. The butler occupied a room in Sanctuary Keep, and this might also be included as a point of entry but for the fact that the narrow windows were twenty feet from the ground and the room was always occupied during the hours when the archer was most active.

Spike Holland, occupying his favourite post of observation, which was the top of the castle wall about a hundred yards from the keeper's lodge, observed the tour of inspection through a pair of powerful field-glasses, and presently saw the old man and his secretary disappear in the castle entrance.

The arrival of the new dogs was the cause of Spike's vigilance. Later, at the telephone, his news editor had a few caustic comments to offer.

"That Garre ghost story is getting a trifle thin, Holland, and I don't think that the new dogs quite justify your holiday. Can't you get into the castle and interview Bellamy?"

Digitized by Google

"What's the matter with interviewing the ghost?" asked the sarcastic Spike. "It'd be easier. I'm just about as popular with the old man as a cigar lighter in a powder plant. Let me stay on, Mr. Syme. I've got a big notion that things will happen at Garre before the week's out. And I'm fixing an interview with Bellamy . . . honest. . . . No, I'm not inventing."

Spike had a peculiar instinct for trouble, and he sensed trouble here. There were all the elements and constituents of tragedy under his hand. Strolling aimlessly through the village, he heard the harsh warning of a motor-horn and stepped aside to see Valerie pass. The car pulled up a dozen yards farther on, and she leant out and beckoned him.

"Mr. Holland, will you come in?"

Spike jumped into the car, wondering what was the cause of her obvious embarrassment.

"I want to ask you a favour," she said a little breathlessly. "Have you . . . could you get me a revolver?"

Then, seeing his eyebrows lift, she went on hurriedly and a little incoherently:

"Lady's Manor is rather isolated, and it occurred to me . . . well, it is lonely, isn't it? And Mr. Howett never carries firearms of any description. I wanted to buy one . . . an automatic in London, but I found that there are stringent police regulations and one has to get a permit. . . . Then I saw you, and it occurred to me . . ."

"Surely, Miss Howett," said Spike as she stopped to take breath. "I've got a gun at the hotel. I don't know why I carry it around in this peaceful land, but I certainly have one. If you'll wait I'll go get it."

He returned to the Blue Boar at a run and presently reappeared.

"It's loaded," he said as he slipped the weapon from his pocket, "but it is only a little one. And, Miss Howett, if you ever kill a burglar with it, will you give me the exclusive story?"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXII

A Name in the Paper

Bellamy seldom read newspapers, but the *Globe* had forced itself upon his attention. The only newspaper he ever read with interest was a local weekly, the *Berkshire Herald,* and even this he did not read himself. It was part of Savini's duties to read this journal aloud before dinner every Thursday, the day on which it was published. Sometimes he had to read every line that was printed, from the first advertisement on the front page to the account of some obscure agricultural show on the last. At other times his master was less exacting.

Although he did not mix with "the county" and neither invited nor accepted invitations, Abe Bellamy was interested in all that happened within the confines of Berkshire. He never refused a subscription that was asked of him, but invariably declined personal interviews. He gave largely to local funds, insisting, however, that his name should not appear. Julius used to wonder why a man so sour and naturally uncharitable gave so unsparingly. It was certainly from no desire to help his fellow-men or to contribute to the happiness of the unfortunate. Once, when he had remarked on the size of a cheque which Bellamy had sent to the funds of a Hunt Committee, the old man had growled a sentence which was, perhaps, an explanation for his generosity.

"I guess Garre Castle has always given," he said.

He was carrying on the traditions of the dead overlord whose banneret had floated on the flagstaff of Sanctuary Keep.

Abe Bellamy was naturally medieval. He belonged to the age when heavy men rode big-barrelled horses and sent their assassins to rid themselves of their enemies.

When they had come back from the kennels Julius re-

Digitized by Google

membered that the *Berkshire Herald* awaited discussion, and groaned inwardly, for he was not in the mood for reading aloud the puerilities which filled the pages of the local sheet. He rather hoped that the arrival of the new dogs would so completely absorb the old man that he would forego his usual Thursday recreation; but Abe's first words as he entered the library dispelled that illusion.

The old man was in his chair, his hands clasped before him, his pale eyes fixed on the blazing logs.

"Get that newspaper, Savini," he said, and Julius obeyed.

Today the old man was in his most requiring mood. Julius had to read column after column of stock sales, a lengthy account of a political meeting at a neighbouring town in which Bellamy could have had no interest whatever.

"I don't get their politics—never have," he grumbled. "It's all graft, anyway."

Presently Julius reached the column which was devoted to personalities. It was a column plentifully interspersed with advertisements extolling the virtues of cattle cakes and mechanical reapers.

"Here's something about the people at Lady's Manor," he said, looking up.

"Read it," commanded his employer.

Bellamy sat, his head bent forward, his eyes closed. He seemed to be asleep. Once, and only once, Julius had made the mistake of believing that he was. He had never repeated his error.

"'The new tenant of Lady's Manor,'" he read, "'is a famous oil magnate, whose life has been something of a romance. Emigrating to America, he was a poor farmer in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania——'"

"Ah!"

Abel Bellamy was suddenly wide awake and sitting upright.

"A farmer in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania?" he repeated. "Go on, go on."

Julius was taken aback by this sudden interest.

"Go on!" roared the old man.

"'. . . but a sudden stroke of fortune enabled him to

Digitized by Google

purchase a larger farm in another part of the state, on which oil was found, a discovery that laid the foundation of his great fortune. Both Mr. Howett and his daughter, Miss Valerie Howett——'"

"What?"

The word was almost screamed. Abe Bellamy was on his feet, glaring down at the secretary, his eyes flaming.

"Valerie Howett!" he yelled. "Valerie Howett! You're lying, you swine!"

He snatched the paper from the man's hand and peered down at the printed page.

"Valerie Howett!" He repeated the words in a whisper. "Oh, my God!"

For the first time in the course of their acquaintance Julius saw his master shaken. The hand that came to his lips trembled.

"Valerie Howett," he repeated, staring blankly at the secretary. "Lady's Manor. . . . Here!"

Suddenly he strode across to his desk and pulled at a drawer. It was locked, but he was too impatient to find the key, and with a wrench he dragged the drawer open, smashing the catch of the lock as though it had been made of pith. He tossed out the papers and pulled forth a little object which he laid on the table. Julius saw, with a sinking of heart, that it was the blood-stained handkerchief that had been discovered in the store-room.

"Eh," muttered the old man. "Valerie Howett."

He looked across under his heavy brows at the other.

"You knew these initials were the same," he said.

"I never connected them," said Julius hurriedly. "Besides, she wasn't living in the neighbourhood then."

"True."

Bellamy picked up the handkerchief and held it in his huge palm. Then he flung it into the drawer again and slammed it back.

"You can go," he said curtly. "Leave the newspaper. I'll ring for you when I want you. Tell them to serve my dinner quickly."

Savini had been in his own room across the hall less than

Digitized by Google

ten minutes before he heard the door of the library open, and Bellamy called him.

"Come here, you!" he commanded.

He had recovered from his agitation and was his normal self again, though the shock he had received had left its mark.

"I suppose you've been sitting over there wondering what was biting me," he said. "Well, you needn't. I knew somebody named Howett once, and a young lady whose name was Valerie. It was the coincidence that got me rattled. What is she like?"

"She's very beautiful."

"Beautiful, is she?" said the old man thoughtfully. "And her father?"

"You must have seen him, Mr. Bellamy," said Julius. "They were staying at the Carlton, and on the same floor."

"I've never seen him," interrupted Abe impatiently. "What is he like?"

"He is rather a tall, thin man."

"Miserable looking, eh?" asked Abe keenly.

"Of course, you've seen him," said Julius.

"I haven't seen him; I'm merely asking you. And his wife—is she with him?"

"No, sir. I believe Mrs. Howett is dead."

The old man stood with his back to the fire regarding his cigar attentively. He bit off the end and lit up before he spoke. It was very unusual for Mr. Bellamy to smoke before dinner, and Julius wondered whether the cigar was a sedative to badly damaged nerves.

"Perhaps I have seen him," he said at last. "And the girl's beautiful, eh? Clever and bright. Dark or fair?"

"She's dark."

"And full of life, eh? Vivacious—that's the word, ain't it?"

"Yes, Mr. Bellamy, I think that describes her pretty accurately."

The other man took out the cigar and looked at the ash; then he put it back between his strong, white teeth and stared up at the raftered roof.

Digitized by Google

"Her mother is dead," he repeated. "Where had she been living before she came back to England? Find out. I want to know whether she was in New York in"—he looked at his cigar again—"seven years ago. Staying at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Send a cable right away and see if you can get any information. I want particularly to know if she was staying at the Fifth Avenue Hotel on the seventeenth of July, 1914. Go right away to the post office. If it is closed, take the car and go to London. Send it to the manager of the hotel; they are certain to have records. Now hurry!"

"If the post office is closed I can get the message through on the 'phone," said Julius, and Bellamy nodded.

He looked at his watch.

"Seven o'clock. It is two o'clock in New York. We ought to get a reply tonight. Tell the telegraph people that we're getting an urgent wire through. Ask them if they can keep open for us. It doesn't matter what it costs. Now, make no mistake about this, Savini: I want to know *tonight!* They'll know my name. I had a room there all that year. I wasn't there, but I had a room there," he added. "Now hurry!"

Julius got through on the telephone and came back five minutes later with the information that the message was on its way. He found the old man exactly where he had left him, the cigar in the corner of his mouth, his hands clasped behind him, his head bent.

"Have you ever spoken to this girl?"

"Once, Mr. Bellamy. Quite by accident. I saw her at the Carlton," replied Julius.

"She never showed any interest in me, I suppose? Never asked you questions about me or my life?"

Julius met his suspicious eyes.

"No, sir," he said with well-simulated surprise. "If she had I should naturally have told her nothing, and reported the circumstance to you."

"You're lying," said Bellamy. "If she had asked you for information and had paid you well enough, you would have told her all you knew. I guess there's nothing in the

Digitized by Google

world, short of murder, that you wouldn't do for money."

At that precise moment Julius would have added even the crime of homicide to his many others.

In his absence Bellamy had opened the drawer and taken out the handkerchief again. It lay underneath the chair he had vacated. Now he picked it up.

"She has a maid, I suppose? Make up to her, and find out if this belongs to the girl. The initials may mean nothing. No, you are not to take it away; carry it in your mind. Get another handkerchief. She's certain to have these things in sets. Pay anything that is asked. You can have all the money you require."

Mechanically he took from his pocket the long thin key that Julius had only seen once before, and looked at it as though to assure himself that it was in his possession.

"Is that newspaper boy in the village still?" he asked.

"I don't know, Mr. Bellamy. I never speak to newspaper reporters."

"Hell!" said the man impatiently. "I'm not accusing you of anything. Do you know whether he's here? Go and find out. If he is in the village, bring him up." An astounding order, which Julius hastened to obey.

"Before you go, put a trunk call through for me—789 Limehouse. Switch the connection through to the library."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIII

Spike Pays a Call

Julius carried out his instructions and hastened through the darkening park to the village. To his relief he found Spike Holland engaged in a bowling match with a local champion.

"Wants to see me?" said Spike. "Is he delirious?"

"Now listen, Holland. Remember that if the old man asks you, you've never spoken to me——"

"Aw! Shut up," said Spike wearily. "What's the great idea? Is he going to ask me to spend the evening at the castle?"

"I don't know. He's just crazy tonight."

"Has anything happened?" asked Spike as they walked up the park together.

"Nothing," replied Julius promptly. He wanted to keep the strange effect which the mention of Valerie Howett's name had had upon the old man for his own private consideration.

He knocked and turned the handle of the library door, but it was locked. The thickness of the door and the covering portière precluded any sound of Abe Bellamy's voice reaching the outer hall.

"I expect he's telephoning; he put through a call just before I came out."

Spike was looking admiringly at the lofty entrance-hall with its stone walls and vaulted roof. The broad stone staircase was as it had been in the days of the last de Curcy, with the exception that it was covered now with a broad strip of carpet.

"Where does that lead to?" he asked, and Julius told him.

"That is my room." He pointed to the door. "Through

Digitized by Google

there is the dining-room, which is never used except by me, and a drawing-room, which he hasn't furnished."

"Where's the butler?" asked Spike, remembering suddenly that he desired to make the acquaintance of that domestic.

"He'll be getting the old man's dinner now. I can't call him," replied Julius.

The key of the lock turned, and Abe Bellamy appeared in the doorway.

"Come right in, Holland," he said. "You needn't wait, Savini. I'll ring for you when I want you."

He closed the door behind the wondering Spike.

"I have been thinking things over, Holland," said the old man, and the air of geniality sat awkwardly upon him, "and I'm sorry I roasted you the other day. Now, if there is any information I can give you about this all-fired green spook, you can ask me for it. I can tell you this, that he's a mighty substantial ghost. I found my two dogs doped this morning."

"He came into your room again?"

The old man nodded. Spike did not tell him that he had already had this information, and that by this time it was in type.

"Where are you staying, Holland?"

"I'm staying at the old village inn, the Blue Boar."

"That's fine," said Abe Bellamy. "Have a cigar. They're not so good as those I have in London, and they won't spoil your palate," he added with artificial good-humour.

Spike selected a specimen, wondering what was really the object of the summons that had brought him to Garre Castle.

"Pretty well acquainted with all the people of the village by now, I guess?" said Bellamy. "Got enough particulars from the tradespeople to write a history of my life, eh? Nice people?"

"They're pretty good," said Spike.

"Who's that man at Lady's Manor? He's from America too, isn't he? Mighty nice daughter, they tell me."

"She's certainly a peach," agreed Spike.

Digitized by Google

"Know 'em pretty well? Did you know 'em back home?"

"I didn't move in their set," said Spike. "Besides, I'm not a Philadelphia man. I'm from New York."

Bellamy nodded.

"All the best newspaper men come from New York," he said, though the compliment nearly strangled him. "I suppose this girl—what's her name?—Valerie Howett is interested in the castle, eh? Wants to know all about it?"

"I can't say that she has shown any particular interest. She's more taken up with Lady's Manor," said Spike, and the old man seemed a little disappointed.

"Why, it's only natural that she should be interested," he said after a pause. "Here am I, an old roughneck American, living in a castle thousands of years old. She's never said she'd like to see over the place, eh?"

"She may have," said Spike carelessly.

"Well, bring her along, Holland. Tell her to call on me any day, and I'll be pleased. Her father pretty well?" he asked.

"So far as I know," said Spike.

"Got an idea I used to know him," said Abe reflectively. "Short-sighted man—used to have trouble with his eyes."

"He is still very short-sighted, and I think Miss Howett told me that there was a time when he was nearly blind."

"Well, will you tell her? You needn't go to the trouble of making a special call, but if you see her you might tell her what I have said."

"I certainly will," said Spike, and knew by the old man's tone that the interview was over, and that the mission which had just been given to him was the reason for his being sent for.

"I guess that you meet a lot of people, being a newspaper man, who are poor, eh, Holland?" Bellamy put a hand in his pocket and brought out a bundle of crisp bank-notes. He skinned two and threw them on to the desk. "If you see anybody who's short of a hundred, you'll find that money useful."

Spike looked from the notes to the old man and smiled.

"I don't meet people who want money that bad, Mr.

Digitized by Google

Bellamy," he said, "and if I do I'll send them to you. I never carry other people's money in my pocket."

"Well, consider it your own," said Bellamy with a twisted smile.

"The only money I consider my own is the money I earn," said Spike.

With a shrug Abe Bellamy picked up the notes and put them back in his pocket.

"Have it your own way," he said, and pulled the bell.

Spike expected that the butler would appear, but it was Julius Savini who came.

"Take Mr. Holland down to the lodge gates, will you, Savini. And then come back to me. Good night, Holland."

"What did he want you for?" asked Julius when they were clear of the wall. "He didn't ask whether I'd been telling you——" he began anxiously.

"The strange thing about the interview was that we didn't mention you at all," said Spike. "I can't understand how we managed to get through ten minutes' conversation without talking about you, but we did."

"What did he want?" persisted Savini, who was not thin-skinned.

"He wanted to perform an act of kindness and charity," said Spike, "and I'm wondering just what devil scheme he has got at the back of his mind. I wish I'd seen that butler," he added thoughtfully.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIV

The Great Adventure

Julius waited until the reporter was out of sight, and then, keeping in the shadow of the castle wall, which formed one side of the village street for a few hundred yards, he strode out in the direction of Lady's Manor. It was a fairly long walk, for the Manor House lay to the north of the town, and it seemed longer because he was in a hurry to get through with his mission.

He was reaching out his hand to open the gate when he became aware that somebody was standing in the shadow of the yew hedge. Savini almost jumped.

"Who is that?" he asked sharply, and then the figure moved and he saw it was Mr. Howett.

"Mr. Savini, isn't it?"

"Yes, Mr. Howett. I'm sorry I—er—but you gave me a start."

In the moonlight Mr. Howett's lined face seemed pale. It may have been a trick of the light, but Julius could have sworn that the pallor was unnatural.

"You are going to see Miss Howett?"

"Yes, sir. . . . I wanted to ask her something. It isn't too late?"

"No, no. But, Mr. Savini"—he seemed to be embarrassed—"will you as a great favour not tell Miss Howett that you saw me?" he asked.

"Certainly," said the astonished Julius.

"She thinks I am in bed, and she might be alarmed if she knew I was out. I—I sometimes like to walk at night."

"I shall not mention that I saw you, sir," said Julius.

He rang the bell at the porticoed entrance, and the maid opened the door and seemed to be astonished to see him.

Digitized by Google

Miss Howett was up, she said, and left him to go in search of her mistress. Glancing back to the gate, Julius observed that Mr. Howett had disappeared. He was ushered into the big drawing-room, and found Valerie waiting for him.

"It is very late to call, Miss Howett," he said, "but there is a matter I wanted to see you about. The unfortunate interruption to our little talk drove everything out of my head."

She smiled inwardly having already exonerated Julius from blame. She could even find amusement in the recollection of that uncomfortable five minutes.

"You need not apologise, Mr. Savini," she said. "My father is in bed—he goes to bed early—so you can have all the time you want."

Julius had his own views on Mr. Howett's early retirement, but did not express them.

"I want to ask you if you have lost a handkerchief," he said. "The old man has given me the strictest instructions to find out. He behaved in an extraordinary fashion tonight when he learnt that you and Mr. Howett were the new tenants of Lady's Manor." And he told her what had occurred.

As the recital went on a light came to her eyes.

"Then it is true!" she said. "It must be true! If he behaved that way it was because his conscience was working! Why should the mention of my name excite him?"

"That is what I wondered," said Julius. "What do you think was the cause?"

But here she was not prepared to offer information.

"What of the handkerchief?" she asked. "I lost one a week ago, perhaps more than a week ago. It was one of six that I had made in Paris. Have you found it?"

He nodded.

"It was found in Garre Castle," he said deliberately, "on the night that Bellamy shot at the archer, and it was soaked with blood!"

She stared at him.

"My handkerchief—in Garre Castle? Impossible!"

He described the flimsy trifle minutely.

Digitized by Google

"Wait!" she said, and ran out of the room, to return in a little while with something in her hand.

It only needed a glance for Julius to see that it was an exact replica of that which Wilks had found in the storehouse.

"But how extraordinary! I remember now; I lost it the day I first came to Lady's Manor—when I decided to ask my father to rent the place. I missed it in the car going back to London."

"You did not go into the castle grounds? Excuse me if I ask you this, Miss Howett, but I know how very interested you are in Mr. Bellamy. Did you go anywhere near the castle?"

"No." She was emphatic on this point. "I am perfectly certain that I lost it in Lady's Manor. I remember distinctly having it when I drove up to the house."

"That is all, Miss Howett," said Julius, rising. "He wants me to get another handkerchief from your maid. Why he is so frantic about you I don't know."

He was lingering at the door when she recalled her indebtedness to him.

"Really that doesn't matter, Miss Howett," he protested as she counted out the notes. "I feel I ought not to be taking money from you at all."

"The labourer is worthy of his hire," she smiled, and he was not at all sure whether he ought to regard that as a compliment.

Left alone, the girl had to face a decision.

There was a great conflict progressing in Valerie Howett's mind. She had decided upon a course which, by every standard of logic and reason, was doomed to disappointment, if not actual danger; and she had made this decision on top of Jim Featherstone's warning. She was not so perverse, she told herself, that she was contemplating doing the very thing he begged her not to attempt, just because he had begged her to refrain. Her common sense told her that the castle was impregnable to an unauthorised visitor. It would be difficult to gain entry to an ordinary house; how could she expect to pass those loopholed walls,

Digitized by Google

and, even if she did so pass, to find that for which she was searching? Now, when Bellamy knew or guessed who she was, the danger was intensified.

And yet—here she argued against her judgment—there was a half-hope, if the old plan of the castle which she had procured was true in every detail, and if—and this was the matter which seemed most doubtful—the renovations which had been carried out in the past two hundred years had not altogether destroyed the ingress she had discovered.

On the north side of the castle was what was known as the Water Gate. At some period the building had been surrounded by a moat. There had been a stream in the hilly woods behind, and the waters had been diverted to a channel which enabled the owner of the castle to keep his moat filled in spite of the fact that the castle stood upon a gentle rise. The spring had long dried up, and the moat was overgrown with grass, and in places had been filled in. but the Water Gate remained.

She had seen it from the windows of Lady's Manor, a squat opening in the castle wall, barred by a heavy steel grille. It was through this gate that the tradesmen went on their way to the kitchens, and it was through this gate that Valerie had planned to make her entrance into the realms of Abe Bellamy's dark mystery. Common sense told her that the kitchen buildings and the outhouses, which were reached through the Water Gate, would most certainly be distinct from the living part of the castle, and that, even if she found herself within the gate, she would be no nearer to her objective. Yet she thought, for all the folly of it, that she must make the attempt. There was a burning fire within her, a light of hope that not all the checks and discouragements that had come to her had extinguished.

Her father was, as she thought, in bed. The last of three servants she dismissed at twelve, telling the man that she had some work to do. She was invariably the last to retire, and her father was a heavy sleeper, she remembered gratefully. She sat in her little drawing-room trying to kill time. In preparation for the adventure she had dressed herself with special care, and she hoped that the short-sighted

Digitized by Google

Mr. Howett had not noticed that she still wore the golf skirt she had worn earlier in the day.

After the last servant had gone she went out into the garden, and with the aid of an electric torch found her way to the wall, and to the two light ladders she had had brought to the house earlier in the day by the workmen who were still engaged in retiling a portion of the roof. She lifted one from where it lay and planted it firmly against the wall. The second she put by its side, and, mounting to the top rung, she drew it up and lowered it on the other side of the wall, fastening the two together with a cord. This done, she returned to the house. It was too early to make her attempt, and she spent an hour idly.

She had written two unnecessary letters to people in whom she was only mildly interested, and had begun a third when she was reminded that she had had a very poor dinner. The kitchen lay on a lower level than the remainder of the house, and was reached down a long stone passage and a flight of steps. She carried a candle with her, for Lady's Manor was not wired for electric light. Setting a match to a small stove, she put on the kettle and searched the pantry, being rewarded by the discovery of a plate of pastry, which she brought out and put on the table. Then she went back to the drawing-room, leaving the candle burning.

The house was painfully quiet. The silence was almost oppressive, and she wished that her new piano had arrived. Sitting down at her table, she tried to go on with the unfinished letter, but her mind was so occupied with her adventure that she could not concentrate her thoughts.

She was holding the pen in her hand, striving to bring her mind back to realities, when she heard a sound. It was a click—the sound of a key in the front door at the end of the hall. She sat for a moment frozen with fear, for her overstrained nerves were not proof against this unexpected call.

A second passed, and then she heard the soft swish-swish of feet in the flagged passage. Nearer and nearer they came, and presently they passed the door.

Digitized by Google

Rousing herself, she ran to the door and flung it open. From where she stood she could see the reflected light from the kitchen candle, but nothing else was in sight.

"Is anybody there?" she asked sharply. "Is that you, Clara?"

The answer came in the shape of a crash, and then the light in the kitchen went out suddenly.

Her heart was beating fast, her breath growing shallow, but she bit her lip and restrained the cry of alarm that rose. She still had the electric torch in her pocket, and with trembling hands she pulled it forth and sent a wavering beam of light along the dark hall. And then she remembered Spike's revolver, and returned to her table to secure it. Again she looked down the dark passage.

"Is anybody there?" she asked, and her voice echoed back hollowly.

There was no other answer, and, summoning all her courage, she went slowly along the hall, down the steps, and into the kitchen. The first thing she saw was the plate of pastry. It lay smashed on the floor. That was the sound she had heard, then. She breathed a sigh of relief. The visitor was at least human.

She rekindled the candle, the wick of which was still glowing, and then she saw a curious thing. Though the plate lay smashed on the ground, two pieces still remained on the sideboard. Somebody had picked them up. The kitchen was empty. Beyond was a scullery, and from this a door which led to the coal-cellar. She tried it; it was fast.

Where had the mysterious visitor gone? The windows were barred; there was no place where he could hide. The door leading to the little courtyard at the back of the house was bolted and barred. The garden door Valerie herself had locked when she came in, after placing her ladders, and the key was in her pocket. She tried the cellar door again, and for a second she had a thought of waking the house and bringing down one of the menservants to continue the search. That would mean that her own plans would have to be considerably altered. And then, in the corner of

Digitized by Google

the scullery, she saw two sparks of green fire glaring at her, and jumped. In another second, with a laugh that was almost hysterical, she had lifted the cat.

"You poor thing! I thought you were a ghost," she said. "How dare you break——"

She got so far, and then she saw a green arrow. It lay on the floor, its bright steel point nearest the fragments of plate, and stationary. A green arrow, with a vividly green feathered shaft.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXV

"COLDHARBOUR SMITH"

VALERIE HOWETT did not faint. Slowly, mechanically, she put down the cat she held in her arms, and, stooping, picked up the arrow. The shaft was smooth, the point needle-sharp.

The Green Archer! He had been there, in that very room. Where had he gone?

The sound of the kettle boiling over brought her back to realities. She extinguished the flame of the lamp and returned to the drawing-room, her appetite gone.

The Green Archer! But she had nothing to fear from him. He was the enemy of Abel Bellamy. He was a friend! She tried to overcome the terror that was in her soul, and was partially successful. As one o'clock chimed from the village steeple she went out into the garden, and with knees that were curiously shaky mounted the ladder and descended into Garre Park.

Mr. Bellamy usually occupied two hours over his dinner. Sometimes a longer period, but never shorter. He broke all his rules when, half an hour after the meal had been served, he rang the bell for the servants to have the table cleared and removed.

" 'Phone to the lodge and tell them I'm expecting a visitor —a Mr. Smith. Have him brought up as soon as he arrives."

"Yes, sir," said Savini, understanding why the meal had been so short.

"Bring some brandy and a siphon of soda, and a box of those cheap cigars," he said. "Was Holland surprised that I asked him to come up? I suppose he told you why I sent for him?"

"No, he didn't," replied Julius, not flinching under the

Digitized by Google

old man's scrutiny. "The servants are complaining about the dogs, sir," he said. "They say the kennels are so near the kitchen that they dare not pass them."

"Get new servants," snarled Abe Bellamy. "And don't carry kitchen complaints to me unless you want me to send you into the kitchen to eat."

The old Adam had not disappeared, even under the chastening influence of the discovery which he had made in the *Berkshire Herald*.

Julius hastened to carry out his employer's instructions, and wondered for what reason Coldharbour Smith had been summoned to Garre.

Later the old man varied his orders and sent Julius to the lodge to await the arrival of the visitor.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when Coldharbour Smith arrived in a London taxi-cab, and it was evident that he had stopped many times on the road to entertain the driver, for both he and the chauffeur had reached a condition of hilarity that scandalised the lodgekeeper.

"Mr. Smith, I think you'd better tell your friend not to make so much noise. The village is full of gossip, and Mr. Bellamy would not like to give them cause for talking."

Coldharbour Smith was a man of fifty—tall, wiry, and coarse of speech; a dark, big-jawed man who might have sat as a model for a Sikes. He resented the friendly advice which Savini offered.

"You go to hell!" he said loudly. "Where's the old man?"

"He's waiting for you."

"Well, let him wait. I want a drink. Come on, Charlie," he addressed the taxi-driver, "we'll go down to the Blue Boar."

"The Blue Boar was closed hours ago," said Julius. "You'd better come up to the castle, Mr. Smith. The governor's waiting for you."

"Well, I'm going to take my friend with me."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Julius sharply.

In some respects he was a man of courage, but it was the authority of Abe Bellamy that sustained him.

Digitized by Google

"All right," said Smith sulkily. "Wait for me, Charlie."

He walked unsteadily by Savini's side.

"What's he sent for me for at this time of night?" he asked truculently.

"I don't know; you had better ask him."

"You've got a lot to say for yourself," said Mr. Smith. "Who are you?"

"I'm Julius Savini."

"What, Julius? Old Julius? Thought you were in gaol. How are all the boys? And what are you doing here, Julius? Footman?"

"I'm Mr. Bellamy's secretary."

"Anybody here I know?" asked Smith as they were approaching the house. "How's the old Green Archer?" He chuckled aloud and slapped his knee at the jest. "Fancy seeing green archers! Your liquor must be a bit strong, Julius. What do you drink—wood alcohol?"

Julius did not reply, and was glad when they reached the hall. Coldharbour Smith—named after the police station which had sheltered him most often—had drunk far too much, and once Julius had to grip him by the arm to prevent his falling. Smith came blinking into the white glare of the library lights, and at a nod from the old man, Julius, withdrawing, was not ill-pleased to be absent from that interview.

"Sit down, Smith," said Bellamy, pointing to a chair. "What about a drink?"

It was then that Abe Bellamy saw the condition of the man.

"You've been boozing, you dog," he said. "Didn't I tell you to come straight to me, and to come sober?"

"What's the good of being sober?" asked Smith pleadingly, "when you've got a chance of being drunk? Answer that. You can't. That's logic, Bellamy."

Abe Bellamy went to the table and poured out a glassful of neat brandy. Smith's hand was extended to take the slight refreshment when he received the burning liquid in his face. He started back with a yell, put up his hands to his eyes, and rubbed frantically.

Digitized by Google

"You've blinded me!" he howled.

"Shut up! Here, take this."

Bellamy took up a serviette that had been left behind when his dinner-table had been removed. He flung it at the man, and, moaning, the visitor wiped his face.

"That's a dirty trick to play," he whined. "You might have blinded me."

"I hope I've sobered you, you drunken hound! If I haven't I'll find a better way. Get up!"

He gripped Smith's collar and jerked him to his feet, and, dropping one hug paw on either side of the unprepossessing face, he held it as in a vice.

"You've been drawing money for five years and you've done nothing for it, you dog, and the first time I send for you you come boozed! Now you're getting sober, and you'd better! If pain will make you sober I'll give you pain that you'll remember to the last day of your life."

He glared down at the distorted face, and the thumbs closed over the man's eyes. He struggled, gripping at the arms that held him, but he might as well have saved himself the exertion. Presently:

"Sit there!"

Bellamy flung him down in a chair with such violence that the stout furniture creaked.

"I've got some work for you. You wrote me the other day saying that you're tired of this country and you want to go to South America. That means that the police are after you, and it is any betting that they'll get you. I may have a job for you that will take you away and give you spending money for the rest of your life. May have, I say; I'm not certain. I've got to find out for sure. Are you sober?"

"I'm sober, Mr. Bellamy," said the man sullenly.

Abe Bellamy looked down at him.

"You'll do," he said. "You're ugly enough. You're like a snake, Smith, and just now I want a snake, or I may want a snake," he corrected himself. "Now listen."

He walked to the door and locked it. Then he returned to his guest, and they spoke together for an hour.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVI

The Chase

The new butler occupied, as other butlers had occupied, what was known as the king's room in Sanctuary Keep. It was approached by way of the bedroom corridor, and was the only room in the keep that was occupied. What at one time were plain uncovered loopholes had been enlarged into narrow windows that overlooked the main entrance of the castle. The butler had gone to his room long before Mr. Smith had departed, because he had work to do.

When he had arrived he had brought with him two modest grips, one of which contained a change of clothing and linen, and the other certain implements which had been prepared for him in a hurry by a scientific instrument maker. As he laid them out on the table they appeared to be steel spikes about a yard in length. Near the point there was a broad "eye," shaped like the eye of a machine needle, in which had been inserted small thermometers, protected by semicircular shreds of glass. These he surveyed with satisfaction before he searched in his bag for a mallet, which was unlike any other mallet, its head being of rubber.

At the bottom of the grip was a knotted rope, attached at one end to an egg-shaped steel clip. This he fastened about the end of his iron bedstead and pulled. Since the bedstead was fastened against the wall nearest the windows, there was no need to look for any better attachment. He put a second suit and a pair of felt boots handy. The world was very quiet and beautiful, the half-moon turned a distant river to silver and painted the park in soft, elusive hues.

The butler turned out the light and went back to the hall.

It was ten minutes of twelve, and the sound of Smith's taxi-cab was coming faintly to his ears when Abel Bellamy came from the kennels, his four big dogs trailing behind him. The butler was the only man up, Julius having dele-

Digitized by Google

gated to him the task of locking up. Julius did not like dogs.

"Savini gone to bed?" said the old man as he bolted the door.

"Yes, sir," said the butler.

The dogs were sniffing about his feet, and the more savage of the four was growling softly.

"You're not scared of dogs, eh?" said Abe. "Well, perhaps there's no reason why you should be whilst I'm with 'em; but don't you wander about at night, young fellow." And, as if to emphasize his master's warning, the wolfish savage lifted up his head and barked.

"Shut up, you!" said Abe, secretly pleased at this confirmation of his warning. "You can go to bed, young fellow."

The butler went upstairs, and though one of the dogs sniffed at his heels all the way up, he did not look round.

No sooner was he in his room than he locked the door and changed his clothes. Three minutes later he was passing down the rope, hand-over-hand; his instruments had been lowered previously.

He loosened the rope that held them and began his curious work. Near to the Sanctuary Keep he drove one of the spikes into the ground, the rubber mallet making little noise. This done, he walked on, keeping in the shadow of the wall. Presently he stopped and drove in another. The soil here was soft, and he had driven the spike until its head was buried before it occurred to him that he might have some difficulty in finding it again.

He took the bearing, marked it with a stone he found, and went on.

He encircled the castle and came back to the first of the rods he had driven, and drew it out, examining the face of the thermometer with a tiny flash-lamp. It showed forty degrees, a normal temperature. One by one he drew out the rods, and they each showed the same figure. One he could not find. In turning to pick up the stone which marked it he had missed the exact spot. He searched carefully, but his fingers did not touch iron.

Digitized by Google

He was still searching when he heard the sound of a window opening above his head, and crouched back against the wall, realising that he was immediately under Bellamy's room. Suddenly Bellamy's bull voice shouted:

"There he is!"

For a second the butler thought that he had been detected, but, looking across the park, he saw a sight that momentarily made him forget his own precarious position.

A figure had come from the cover of the northern wall and was moving stealthily toward the bush clumps that ran laterally across slopes that dropped down to the east wall.

It was a woman, and he guessed instantly who that woman was and started off at a run toward her.

Abe had not gone to bed immediately. He had had a shock. He wanted to think. Pulling up a chair to the open window, he sat down, resting his elbows on the sill and looking out into the silent park. The moon was between full and new, but it showed enough light to allow Bellamy a clear view almost to the lodge gates. Neither the beauty of the scene nor its mystery interested him; his mind was far away from Garre Park, and twenty-one years behind the hour which was striking as he brooded there. Was it a coincidence, he wondered. There were thousands of people named Howett, and hundreds of Valerie Howetts in the world. But a Valerie Howett that came from Montgomery County—that was narrowing the circumstances to a definite point.

If it were she! He bared his teeth in a merciless smile. What glorious news to carry to the Grey Woman! The thought revivified him, made him young again, and brought to the steady-beating heart a flutter which he had not felt for seven years.

He rose up to his feet and peered from the window. Was it a shadow or a trick of the moon? He could have sworn he saw a stealthy figure moving under cover of the rhododendron bushes. He saw it again; now he was sure. It had crossed a gap between the clumps. It could not be the keepers; they had orders to remain indoors at night.

Digitized by Google

It was then that he shouted, and, turning, rushed out into the corridor. There was a scamper of feet, and two of the dogs came running towards him to rub their heads at his knees. The remaining two were downstairs in the hall. He saw their eyes shining in the darkness and whistled to them softly.

Noiselessly he pulled back the well-oiled bolts and opened the front door, restraining the dogs until he was sure.

Yes, there it was.

"Go, get him!" he roared, and the four hounds leapt as one.

Across the green they sped, silently, swiftly. The intruder had seen the danger; so, too, had the butler. Abe saw the figure dart to the cover afforded by a belt of trees that ran parallel with the wall for some distance. Two of the dogs had seen their quarry, but one alone found the scent.

Valerie Howett flew along, her heart nigh to bursting, her breath coming in short, sobbing gasps, the patter of feet growing nearer and nearer, and behind them racing footsteps of somebody human. She reached the edge of the trees and plunged headlong into their cover. Could she reach the ladder? She dared not look back, and there was no need, for the dog's laboured breathing came to her ears. Never once did she think of the revolver in her pocket, although every step she took brought the smack of it against her hip.

The wood lay on rising ground, a little hillock path led upwards, and the going became more and more difficult. And then the dog leapt. She heard the snap of the fangs. They missed her heel by the fraction of an inch, and the dog lost ground. Her peril gave her superhuman speed, but she was coming into the open. She hardly realised this until she emerged with the crest of the hill before her.

It was her speed that carried her on, otherwise she would have dropped in her tracks in sheer terror. For, clear in the moonlight, his set, white, puffy face staring at her, was a slim green figure, and in his hand a long bow that glittered in the moonlight.

Digitized by Google

She could not stop herself. She was going from one horror to another, but her impetus carried her beyond the check of fear. And then she saw the bow come up, heard the twang of a loosened string, and fell. Some heavy body struck her on the shoulder. She had a momentary glimpse of a great black and yellow hound as it stretched itself in death, and then she fainted.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LINK

"MR. HOWETT wishes to know whether you are coming to breakfast, madam."

Valerie sat up in bed and passed her hand over her eyes. Her head was throbbing.

"Breakfast?" she said dully. "Yes, yes. Will you please tell him I will come down?"

Had she been dreaming? She shivered at the recollection. It had been no dream. Her golf skirt, stained with dust, lay thrown across the back of the chair, and she remembered coming up to bed. Where had she been? When she had recovered consciousness she was in the drawing-room at Lady's Manor. But how had she got there? The Green Archer! She shuddered. Had he carried her across the wall? She must find—the ladders would betray her, she remembered with a start, and got out of bed.

"You need not have come down, my dear," said Mr. Howett, lifting his head to kiss her as she came into the dining-room. He put on his glasses and peered at her. "You're not looking particularly bright this morning, Val. Didn't you sleep well?"

"Very well," she said.

"Then you went to bed too late."

Breakfast was a mockery of a meal; she could eat nothing, and made an early excuse to go out and interview the servants.

"The garden door, miss? No, it was closed and bolted from the inside."

"Bolted? I thought I'd left it open," she faltered.

Of one thing she was certain: she had not reached the drawing-room unaided. She must have been carried over the wall. How, then, could the garden door be bolted from the inside of the house?

Digitized by Google

She hurried into the garden and made for the wall. The first things she saw were the two ladders reposing on their sides. Then the unknown archer must have pulled up the ladders too.

She returned to the house and went into the drawing-room, hoping that there she would find something that would give her an idea of how she had reached there. The room had been dusted, and the few odds and ends that the servants had found had, as usual, been placed upon one of the small tables. The first thing she saw was her handkerchief. It was smeared brown; somebody had used it to wipe her face. She had no recollection of using it herself. By its side was a broken sleeve-link. She looked at the link. It was of gold, with a tiny enamelled monogram. Valerie rang the bell for the maid.

"Thank you for putting these things together," she said. "Where did this come from?"

"I found it on the floor, miss, near the sofa. I thought it was Mr. Howett's, but he says he hasn't lost one."

"But this is only a half," said Valerie.

The three tiny little links of the connecting chain had been broken in the middle.

"Have you found the other?"

"No, miss."

"Will you please help me look? They belong to a friend of mine."

They searched the room, and after a while the maid said:

"Here it is, miss."

It was under the edge of the carpet, and was the exact fellow of the other.

"There were an awful lot of matches on the floor when I came to tidy up this morning, miss. One of them has left a burn." She pointed to a black stain on the brand new Brussels carpet.

"Yes, I did it last night. I couldn't find the lamp. That will do, thank you," said Valerie.

She carried the link to the window and traced the monogram again.

"J. L. F." James Lamotte Featherstone! It couldn't be.

Digitized by Google

It was impossible, she told herself. She slipped the link into the pocket of her sports-coat as the maid came in to announce a visitor. It was Spike Holland, and he was full of news.

"You didn't hear the Green Archer last night, did you? Well, he was arching for old man Bellamy, and got one of his dogs. Bellamy is raising Cain. It appears he saw the archer in the grounds—the first time he's ever been seen outside the castle—and loosed his police dogs at him. Result—one perfectly dead dog; happily the one that Julius was most afraid of, so there's compensation in that. And, Miss Howett, I'm the bearer of an invitation from Abe Bellamy, Esquire, Lord of the Castle of Garre, and High Executioner of Berkshire."

"An invitation for me?" she said in amazement.

Spike nodded.

"Abe has suddenly become intensely ordinary," he said. "He wants to show people his castle—or at least he wants to show you. It appears he saw your name in the paper—didn't know you were staying around here, and he has asked you to come and see the home of the ancient Bellamys, he being the most ancient of them all."

"That is very remarkable of him," she said.

Spike nodded.

"The invitation doesn't extend to Mr. Howett, though I guess he wouldn't object to him going along. And it doesn't extend to me, either. But if you're going, Miss Howett, and you'll let me know the time, I've got the excuse I want for seeing over the castle; he can't very well turn me back if I appear as your escort."

She thought rapidly.

"Yes, I will go—this afternoon after lunch. Will that suit Mr. Bellamy?"

"I'll 'phone him and find out, but I should say any old time would suit him."

"Mr. Holland," she asked, "do you know where Captain Featherstone is at this moment?"

"He was in London yesterday," replied Spike. "Julius saw him there."

Digitized by Google

"He's not in the village?"

Spike shook his head.

"Why, do you want him?"

"No, no," she said hastily. "I was curious, that is all."

What could be the explanation, she wondered, when she was alone. It was Jim Featherstone who had carried her into the house—of that she was sure. There was no mystery about the bolted garden door; he must have passed through the front door and out of the house. And then she remembered the sound she had heard—the unlocking of the door, the swish of footsteps in the hall of Lady's Manor, the broken plates—and the green arrow.

"It isn't true," she said aloud. "It can't be true."

She was trying very hard to be convinced against her better judgment that Jim Featherstone, Commissioner of Police, was not the Green Archer of Garre Castle.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVIII

VALERIE AT GARRE

THE servants of Lady's Manor excused the presence in the kitchen of their young mistress at such frequent intervals to the fact that the house was something of a new toy.

"That's the third time the young lady's asked why the cellar door was locked last night," said the cook, "and the cellar door doesn't lock."

"She found a bolt on the inside, and I've never seen that before," said the kitchenmaid.

"As you've only been in the house five minutes," said the superior cook, "it isn't surprising that there are lots of things you haven't seen. Now, I saw that bolt the first day I came."

Valerie came back at that moment.

"Don't think I'm fussing, cook, but I want to see that coal-cellar," she said. She had an electric torch in her hand.

"You'll get yourself very dusty, miss," warned the servant, but Valerie was not to be scared by the possibility of griminess.

A dozen stairs led to a large cellar, in the corner of which was a heap of coal that had been brought to the cellar through an outside shoot. Leading from the vault were three doors, which had the appearance of cells. One of these was fitted as a wine-cellar by a previous tenant; the second was littered with empty bottles and packing-cases; the third was locked, and Valerie saw that the lock was new. A small grating gave a view into the interior, and she flashed her lamp inside and tried to see what treasure the locked cell held. She could see nothing except a large black trunk. Returning to collect all the keys she could find or borrow, she made an attempt to open the door, but

Digitized by Google

without success. It did not seem worth while forcing the door for the satisfaction of examining an old trunk which had evidently been left by the former tenant.

When she came back to the kitchen she heard the sound of uproarious laughter, which her sudden appearance checked.

"I'm very sorry, miss," said the cook, "but I was just telling Kate the funny name our cellar has got in the neighbourhood. You see, miss," she said apologetically, "we're old-fashioned people round here, and we use old-fashioned phrases. We always call the castle 'Curcy,' after the gentleman who owned it hundreds of years ago."

"And what is your funny name for the cellar?" smiled Valerie.

"The people call it 'Loffy,' but I believe the proper name is 'Loveway'."

"Why on earth do they call it that?" asked Valerie.

But the antiquarian researches of the cook had not gone very far.

Knowing what she knew, Valerie was looking forward to her visit to Garre Castle with mixed feelings. She had never spoken to Abel Bellamy, though she had seen him often enough, and she wondered whether she would be able to disguise from his keen eyes the loathing she felt for him. She had had many opportunities of meeting him, but it was the fear that she would betray herself which had kept her from a closer acquaintance. She dreaded the meeting less because her mind was so completely absorbed by the discovery she had made that morning about Jim Featherstone. Every time he came back to her mind she grew more and more bewildered. What object could he have? She searched vainly for a reason. If Bellamy were under the suspicion of the police, there were scores of ways by which they could keep him under observation. She was well enough acquainted with police methods to know that they would not hesitate to make an open search of Garre Castle if they had the slightest suspicion of the man. Why should he masquerade as the Green Archer? She shook her head hopelessly, and was glad when Spike arrived to escort her.

They found Julius Savini waiting at the lodge gates.

Digitized by Google

"Bellamy said nothing about you, Holland," he said. "You'd better let me 'phone up."

" 'Phone nothing," said Spike. "I'm not going to allow Miss Howett to go into Garre Castle unless I am with her. I have a responsibility," he said virtuously, "which I do not intend to delegate to anybody else, Savini."

Eventually, without consulting his employer, Julius allowed the reporter to accompany the girl, and apparently the old man had expected his arrival, for he showed no sign of annoyance when Spike put in an appearance.

He came out of the hall to greet her, and she braced herself for the meeting. She looked up at him, almost awe-stricken by his gigantic ugliness. The big, puffed, red face, his height, the suggestion of tremendous strength in the broad shoulders—for a moment she could not loathe him. There was something superhuman about him, something that explained his excesses, his immense hate, his wickedness. So, for the first time, Valerie met Abel Bellamy.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DUNGEONS

"GLAD to have you come to the castle, Miss Howett."

Her little hand was lost in the big paw that grasped it. Never once did his pale eyes leave her face.

"I kind of felt that I ought to be civil to a neighbour," he said. "If I had known you were here I'd have asked you to come up before."

In the east wing of the castle, that in which the unused dining-room was situated, was a long picture gallery filled with works of the old masters. This was a side of his character that Spike had never suspected.

"I didn't know you were a collector, Mr. Bellamy."

For a second the old man dropped his cold eyes to the reporter.

"I have collected nothing in my life except money," he said laconically. "I bought these with the castle. They cost half a million dollars, and I'm told they're worth twice that amount. I want you to see this picture, Miss Howett," he said. "It is called 'The Woman with the Scar'."

The portrait was an example of the Flemish School. It showed a beautiful woman with a bare arm, on which was the faintest indication of a cicatrix.

"Most ladies wouldn't like to have their scars painted," he said, "but from what I've heard of this painter, who was a Dutchman, he always drew what he saw. A young lady in these days wouldn't stand for that, miss?"

It was a challenge, and she accepted it instantly.

"I'm not so sure that I should object," she said coolly. "I have a scar on my left elbow which is not at all unsightly; I fell when I was a baby and cut the skin."

She had no sooner said the words than she regretted them, but the regret was short-lived.

"You have a scar on your left elbow where you fell when

Digitized by Google

you were a baby," repeated Abe Bellamy slowly, and she knew why she had been invited to come. Abe Bellamy wanted to be absolutely sure. She could and would have saved him the trouble.

Abe escorted his visitors back to the library. Of a sudden it seemed that his interest in the castle as a show-place had evaporated, and he hinted there was little more to be seen.

"You haven't shown us your dungeons yet, Mr. Bellamy," said Spike.

"Why, no," said Bellamy slowly, "but I don't think Miss Howett would like to see those gloomy places—would you, young lady?"

"I should." Her voice shook in spite of her efforts to keep control.

"Well, you shall see them, though they're less gloomy now than they used to be," said Abe.

He led the way again to the hall and kept them waiting for a second while he went into Savini's room to get the keys. Julius tentatively joined the party, expecting to be sent back, but apparently Abe was oblivious to his presence.

They went again through the picture gallery, out through a small door to a square, stone room, which the old man explained had been the guard-room of the castle. In ancient times it had opened into the park, but the door was now a fixture. From the stone chamber a circular stone staircase took them to a vaulted basement.

"I'll put on the lights," said Bellamy. He turned a switch, and they saw they were in a great chamber, the roof of which was supported by three stout pillars. "This was the main prison," said the old man. "All kinds of people were kept here. Those rings you see in the pillars, Miss Howett, were used for attaching chains."

"How horrible!" she said, and he laughed heartily.

"It is a paradise to the little dungeons," he said.

At the far end of the vault he stooped and pulled up a stone trap.

"If you want to go down there, you'll see the less pleasant apartments; but I shouldn't advise you to—the stairs are very steep, and you'll have to carry a light."

Digitized by Google

"I should like to go," she said, and Savini was sent back for a lantern.

The dungeons of the lower level consisted of four rooms, two of which were very large and two extraordinarily small. They were little better than kennels, not being high enough for a man to stand in or long enough for one to stretch himself in comfort. Yet in those narrow tombs men and women had lived for years, he told them, and showed them letters of a strange character cut into the stone walls.

"They call these places Little Ease," said Mr. Bellamy complacently. "That stone bench was their bed, and if you'll look you'll see it is worn smooth by people who have slept there year after year, until the stone is about the shape of their bodies."

Valerie gazed in horror.

"What kind of beasts were they that treated human beings like that?" she asked.

"Well, I don't know," drawled the old man. "There was something to it."

"Why not kill them outright?"

"And lose them?" he said in astonishment. "What is the good of that? Suppose you hate a man, what's the use of killing him? He just escapes you. You want to keep him in some place where you can go and see him and know he's there."

She made no reply.

"And that, I think, is about all the castle has to show you, unless you're interested in gas cookers," he said, "or towers and empty stone rooms."

"What is that?"

She pointed to a deep, ragged hole in the ground; the jagged sides showed the raw rock through which it had been blasted. He looked up with a smile, and she followed his eyes. Above, fixed firmly into the wall, was a replica of the beam she had seen in Sanctuary Keep, and she closed her eyes tight.

"They hanged a few people outside, but they hanged a whole lot inside," said Abe cheerfully.

She was glad to get back to the daylight.

Digitized by Google

"Well, I guess there's nothing more to show you," said Abe for the second time as they got back to the hall.

"Mr. Bellamy, can I see you alone?"

She acted on the impulse of the moment. A second before she had no other desire than to leave this place of gloom and flee out into God's sunlight and breathe an air that was untainted with sorrow and suffering.

He shot a suspicious glance at her.

"Certainly, Miss Howett," he answered slowly. His gaze fell upon the two men. "I told 'em to serve tea in the library. Maybe after tea, young lady?"

She nodded. What a fool she was, she thought, everlastingly leaping at the call of impulse, everlastingly regretting her folly. And she was regretting now, and trying to hunt up some excuse for a private interview.

A trim maid was in attendance.

"Where's Philip?" growled the old man.

"It is his afternoon off, sir," replied Julius.

"How many afternoons off does he have a week?" began Bellamy, and then arrested a choler which was not in keeping with his rôle of genial host.

Valerie wandered to the window to look out upon the peaceful close, with its vivid green lawn and its trim trees and background of grey stone; and, seeing her stand by one of the windows, and noting her position, Abe Bellamy was seized with a desire to break into raucous laughter.

Spike saw the smile in his eyes and wondered what secret thought had tickled the old man. The reporter's active mind never ceased absorbing all the details of the room. Though it was called library, there were very few books in evidence, one tall case near the door at the farther end being all he could see. Yet it was a noble room, and modern hands had done nothing to improve it out of its character. The polished wood floor was uncarpeted, a number of big rugs relieving its bareness; and even the rugs were in keeping with the tone of the room.

Bellamy, following his eyes, said: "The floor of this room is stone; you'd never guess it. I had the parquet floor fitted over. Stone is a little too chilly for a man of my age."

Digitized by Google

That was the only comment he made upon the library, and soon after Spike and Julius, who had been granted the unaccustomed honour of an invitation, rose.

"Savini will amuse you, Holland, whilst Miss Howett is talking to me," said Abe Bellamy. "I don't suppose you'll be with me very long, Miss Howett?"

"Not very long," she said.

Her courage was oozing away. She wanted to leave with the others, and the prospect of facing this man alone turned her blood to ice. Coward! coward! she said inwardly, and hated herself for her weakness. Presently the door closed on the two men, and Bellamy came back, his hands in his pockets, his powerful shoulders hunched, and he stood, his legs apart, and his back to the fireplace, looking down at her.

"Now, Miss Howett," he said, and his voice was harsh and held a threat, "what is it you want to see me about?"

It needed only that hint of antagonism to give her the strength she needed.

"Mr. Bellamy," she said quietly, "I want you to tell me something."

"I'll tell you anything that it is good you should know," he said, and again the savage in him peeped forth.

"Then tell me this," she said, speaking deliberately. "Where is my mother?"

Not a muscle of his face moved; his eyelids did not so much as blink. Only he stared down at her, immovable.

"Where is my mother?" she said again.

His great frame was shaking; his face had gone a duller red; the mouth had curled up yet a little more. Slowly, as if it were moving against his will, his hand came out toward her, and she shrank back before the fury of him. And then:

"Would you like another log on the fire, sir?"

The old man glared round at the intruder. It was the new butler—suave, deferential, remarkably unemotional.

The effort the old man made to control his fury was superhuman. The veins stood out on his forehead and he shivered in his rage, but by his own amazing will he mastered himself.

Digitized by Google

"I will ring for you if I want you, Philip," he said gratingly. "I thought you had a holiday."

"I came back early, sir."

"Get out!"

The words came like the shot of a gun, and the butler bowed and went, closing the door behind him. Abe Bellamy turned to the white-faced girl.

"Your mother, I think you remarked?" he said huskily. "I guess you gave me a start. I never met your mother, Miss Howett. No, ma'am, I've never met your mother, and I've never met you. You had a room in the same hotel as me in London, and I guess you had a room in the same hotel as me in New York, round about July, 1914. A whole lot of letters used to come for me, though I was in England. People wrote who thought I was in New York, and round about July the fourteenth a packet of letters was stolen, ma'am. Perhaps the thief who took those letters saw something in one of them that made her think that I knew where her mother was. That's likely; I can't help how thieves think, whether they're male thieves or female thieves. I don't know where your mother is," he went on in a monotone in which every syllable was emphasised. "I don't know where your mother is, if she isn't dead and in her grave. And if I knew where your mother was, why, it would be no business of mine to tell you, Miss Howett. I guess she's dead all right. Most people you lose trace of are dead. There's no hiding-place like the grave; it keeps you safe and snug."

"Where is my mother?" Her voice sounded faint.

"Where's your mammy?" he repeated. "Didn't I tell you? You've got fool ideas in your head, Valerie Howett. That comes of reading letters that have been stolen. If you saw a letter of hers that she sent to me, why, it would be surely easy to find her."

With a sideways jerk of his head he dismissed her as though she had been some scullery wench, and she walked unsteadily to the door. Once she looked back and saw him glaring after her, and the malignity in his eyes was terrible to see.

Digitized by Google

"Why, what's the matter?"

Spike came to the swaying girl and caught her by the arm.

"Nothing, only I feel a little faint. Will you take me outside, Mr. Holland?"

She looked for the butler. He was nowhere to be seen.

"Did he do anything?" said the indignant Spike. "If he's as big as a house, I'll go in and——"

"No, no, no," she stopped him. "Will you take me home, please, and walk very slowly? And if I get hysterical, will you please shake me?"

Whilst they were walking slowly down the path Mr. Julius Savini was hurrying in search of the new butler.

"The old man wants you," he said in a low voice, "and he's raving mad."

"I'm a little mad myself," said the butler, and went with a light step to meet the wrath of Abel Bellamy.

"What's your name?" the old man bellowed at him.

"Philip, sir—Philip Jones."

"How many times have I told you not to come into this room unless I send for you?"

"I thought the party was here, sir."

"You thought that, did you? Did you hear what that girl was saying?"

"The lady was saying nothing when I came in. I thought you were showing her some parlour tricks, sir."

Not a muscle of the butler's face moved.

"You thought *what?*" shouted Bellamy.

"I thought, sir, from the position of your hands, you were showing her a parlour trick. Gentlemen, even in the best families, are fond of showing visitors parlour tricks," said the butler, mechanically picking a crumb from the hearth-rug. "I am extremely sorry that I was *de trop.*"

"I don't get that," said Abe, completely taken aback.

"It was a French expression."

"Well, damn you, don't use French expressions to me," roared Bellamy. "And if you come here again without being sent for, you're fired. Do you get that?"

"Quite, sir. What would you like for dinner?"

The speechless man could only point to the door.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXX

The Story

Walking in her garden in the dusk, revolving in her chaotic mind the events of the past twenty-four hours, Valerie saw something white flutter over the wall and hurried to pick up the note. She opened it and read the scrawled lines and put the letter away in her handbag.

At ten o'clock came a visitor in the shape of James Featherstone. For his advent Miss Howett was not unprepared. Valerie was waiting for him in the passage.

"I'm glad you've come," she said quickly. "I am going to tell you the story of Mrs. Held." They were alone together in the drawing-room. "First, let me give you something of yours. The maid found it here this morning." She took a little paper package from her writing-table.

"My sleeve-link, I think. I looked for it, but I hadn't a great deal of time. I wanted to get out before you recovered."

"You brought me here? No, no, don't tell me." She held up her hand. "I don't want to know any more. You have been wonderfully good to me, Captain Featherstone, and I should have saved myself a great deal of trouble and prevented myself looking very foolish," she added with a faint smile, "if I had told you before what I am going to tell you now. You do not know, though you may guess—for there seems to be no limit to your cleverness—that dear Mr. Howett is not my father."

Obviously, from the look on his face, she saw this was news to him.

"Mr. Howett, twenty-three years ago, was a very poor man," she said. "He lived on a very old and very poor farm in Montgomery, at a place called Trainor, and he eked out just a bare existence by the sale of garden truck. In those days he suffered from a terrible affliction of the

Digitized by Google

eyes, which made him nearly blind. He and my dear foster-mother lived alone. They had no children, although they had been married many years, and, difficult as it was to feed and keep themselves, they advertised their willingness to adopt a child. You understand, Captain Featherstone, that I am not going to give you any information about the subsequent career of Mr. Howett, or the wonderful fortune he had when he took another farm in another part of the state and oil was discovered on his property.

"There were many replies to the advertisement, none of which was entirely satisfactory. One day Mrs. Howett, who naturally carried on all the correspondence, received a letter. Here it is."

She took a paper from the desk and handed it to the detective. It was addressed from an hotel on Seventh Avenue, New York, and ran:

"DEAR FRIEND,

"In answer to your advertisement, I should be glad if you would adopt a little girl aged twelve months, whose parents have recently died. I am willing to pay one thousand dollars for this service."

"At that time," continued the girl, "Mr. Howett was being hard pressed by a man who had a mortgage on the farm, and I think, fond as he was of children, and anxious as he undoubtedly was to have a little child in the house, the offer of money settled the matter in my favour, for I was the baby. He wrote and accepted. A few days later a man drove up to the farm in a buggy, got down, and lifted out a bundle, which he placed in the hands of Mrs. Howett. There used to be a hired boy on the farm in those days, whose hobby was photography. Somebody had given him a snapshot camera, and the first picture he took with it was the buggy standing at the door with the strange man just on the point of getting out. That picture might have been lost forever, and with it all hope of tracing my parents, but for the accident that the company which manufactured the camera offered a monthly prize for the best snapshot; and the hired boy sent up this very picture, which took a prize

Digitized by Google

and was reproduced in a magazine. I have since seen the original, and, indeed, I have an enlargement."

She took a thick roll of paper from her writing-desk.

"You see, I have all my data here, if I may use one of daddy's favourite words."

She unrolled the photograph and put it under the lamp on the table, and Featherstone joined her.

"There is no doubt about that," he said after a glimpse at the picture. "The man is Abe Bellamy. There's no mistaking the face."

"The curious thing is," said the girl, "that Mrs. Howett did not see anything remarkable about him, for she was almost as short-sighted as Mr. Howett. I was brought up as the Howett's child, as in law I am, for the deed of adoption was drawn up by an attorney, and legally I have no father but Mr. Howett. It was after the death of my foster-mother that I learnt the truth. I was not greatly interested in the discovery of my true parents; I was young, and college was wholly absorbing. It was later, when I began to think for myself, that it occurred to me that, now I was rich—I have my share in Mr. Howett's wells, and his dear wife left me a whole lot of money—I might at least discover who they were.

"And then it was that the illustration of the man getting out of the buggy became really valuable. I had the negative looked up and an enlargement made, and instantly Abel Bellamy was recognised. Nobody knew why I wanted the photograph, of course, and I did not tell them. I had heard of him; he was one of the bad men whose reputation was common property; and the more I learnt of him the more I was certain that I was in no way related to him, and that he had not brought me to the Howetts' farm and given a thousand dollars with a desire to help anybody but himself. I set detectives to work, and they found that the only relation he had was a brother, who had died nearly eighteen years ago. They had had two children, who were also dead. This line of inquiry did not seem very profitable, because very early one of the detectives found that Abe Bellamy and his brother were bad friends and had always been bad

Digitized by Google

friends, and he would be hardly likely to take trouble to help his brother.

"I said nothing to Mr. Howett, but I concentrated all my attention upon Abel Bellamy. I was only seventeen, but every day that passed made me more and more determined to unveil the mystery. Unknown to Mr. Howett, I employed men to examine Bellamy's correspondence. He was a great deal in Europe, and scarcely spent three months of the year in New York. To Chicago he never went at all. Then one day my agents—looking back it seems so absurd that anybody could have accepted a commission from a girl of seventeen, but they did—discovered a letter. I have the original."

She brought the paper to the light of the lamp. The ink was faded, the hand straggling. It ran:

"Little Bethel Street,
"London, N.W.

"You have beaten me. Give me back the child you have taken from me, and I will agree to all your demands. I am broken—broken in heart and spirit by your never-ending persecution. You are a devil—a fiend beyond human understanding. You have taken everything I have—robbed me of all that is dear, and I have no desire to live.

"ELAINE HELD."

Beneath were some words which even Featherstone, who was an expert in these matters, found it difficult to decipher.

"Won't you be generous and tell me . . . little Valerie. . . . It is seventeen years ago last April. . . ."

"It was in April, twenty-four years ago, that I was taken to Mr. Howett," said the girl quietly. "Bellamy made a slip; he told Mrs. Howett my name, Valerie, and then pretended that it wasn't, and asked her to call me Jane. But Mrs. Howett was struck with the name Valerie, and I have been called by it all my life."

Featherstone paced the drawing-room slowly, his hands behind him, his chin on his breast.

Digitized by Google

"Do you think your mother is still alive?" he asked at last.

She nodded her head, her lips quivering.

"I'm sure," she breathed.

"And you think he knows where she is?"

"Yes. I thought she was at the castle. I don't know what wild dreams I had of finding her."

Featherstone returned to his silent pacing.

"You had an interview with the old man. Tell me what passed," he said eventually, and when she had given him a faithful account of the talk he nodded. "You have faith! I don't want to raise your hopes, Miss Howett——"

"You called me Valerie the other day. I think it was almost as much a slip of the tongue as Bellamy's. Won't you please go on calling me Valerie? Perhaps when I know you better I will call you by your name. . . . William, isn't it?"

"It is Jim," he said solemnly, and even in her pain she was secretly amused to see the colour rising in his face, "and you know it is Jim. Well, Valerie, you're not to go to the castle again, or to do anything that involves the slightest risk on your part."

"You don't want to raise my hopes, you were saying, but you did not finish your sentence."

"I was going to say that I have a faint share of your faith, and I am doing what I warned you against: I am making a building of hope on the sandiest of foundations. In a day or two I shall be able to tell you how solid that foundation is. By the way, have you that old plan of the castle? Will you let me have it? I think I can put it to a better use than you," he said quizzically.

She walked with him to the front gate.

"You're going to behave," he said warningly.

She nodded in the darkness; there was just enough light to see her face.

"Good night," he said, and, taking her hand, held it a little longer than was necessary.

"Good night—Jim!"

James Lamotte Featherstone walked back through the village with a light step and a heart that was even lighter.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXI

The New Butler Shows His Teeth

Julius Savini was a very unhappy man. His source of additional revenue had unexpectedly and provokingly dried up. He was too fond of the woman he had married to be angry with her, although she was partly the cause. A nimble-minded man, he began to look round for some new fountain of supply, and his mind vacillated between Valerie Howett and Abe himself. Abe would be a mighty difficult proposition, he realised, but in certain circumstances it was quite possible that he might surprise a secret which would bring him an income at any rate equal to that which went forth with monotonous regularity to Coldharbour Smith.

More than a year he had spent in the service of the Chicago man, without discovering any secret that was worth twopence, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to investigate. The coming of the Green Archer, with its sequel of ubiquitous police dogs, precluded any examination at leisure of Mr. Bellamy's effects by night, and in the daytime he never had a chance. Sooner or later he must make a getaway, find a less exacting occupation in another land, and although Bellamy kept his ready money in the house behind steel doors, there were other ways.

A shrewd man of business, Julius had curtailed his wife's allowance, explaining to her why this was necessary. He had received an immediate reply, demanding his return to town. Her brother had joined a crowd that was working the cross-Atlantic boats, and there was an opening for a man of his capacity and skill. Only for a moment Julius was tempted. The risk was small—but so were the rewards. He could not afford to go after little money. There was big money here, even if the risk was correspondingly large.

He had spoken no more than the truth when he said that in certain circumstances he would arrange the early demise

Digitized by Google

of Abel Bellamy. Given the certainty of escape, he would have killed the old man with as little compunction as he would have killed a rat. He might have shivered for himself in the act, for Julius was very fearful of his own future.

He declined his wife's offer, peremptorily demanding that she dismiss from her mind her half-formed plan for joining in the crowd. When to this he received a defiant answer, he himself went to town, held up the pugilistic Jerry at the point of a gun incontinently, and turned him out of the flat.

"You be a good girl, Fay, and do as you're told," he said in his silkiest voice. "You got me rattled the other day, and I allowed you to call me a fool, but I haven't forgotten it."

"You little coward!" she whimpered.

"Maybe I am," said Julius Savini. "I get frightened of some things, but I'm not frightened of you or the mob you run with. I live with a wild beast, and I'm entitled to shake in my shoes, but I'm not scared of rabbits. I tell you you'll stay here, because I may want you. If you go with that crowd I'll follow you to the end of the world and I'll kill you. I've given you my name, and maybe it is the name of a first-class crook, but all the mud that's coming to it is the mud I'll stir myself."

He left her. She stayed. He never expected she would do anything else. For the moment she felt very sore, and there was an excuse for her, because Savini was a Eurasian and by all known codes a man to be despised.

All this happened within a few days of the tea-party. Events were moving very swiftly, though there was no alteration in the routine of the castle, unless it was that Abe Bellamy was more silent than ever and less easy to get on with.

On the third night Coldharbour Smith arrived unexpectedly and was closeted with his employer for the greater part of the evening. Mr. Smith was completely sober; and when Coldharbour Smith was sober he was even more unpleasant of appearance than he was when drunk. He was a loose-framed man with a dead-white face, short upper lip, and a huge jaw which the scientists call prognathic—which

Digitized by Google

means no more than that his under lip extended beyond his upper lip. He may have shaved some time, but he had the misfortune to appear as though the "some time" was the day before yesterday. His eyes were deep-set and small, and he was slightly bald.

The new butler heard he was coming and asked Julius to let him in.

"Can't you let him in yourself?" complained the secretary.

"I don't like his face; it makes me dream," was the unsatisfactory reply.

And then followed the day of tremendous happenings. It began eventfully enough soon after breakfast. Abe had gone to the kennels and had released the three remaining dogs for a run in the park. It happened that his way led past the entrance-hall, and the new butler was standing there instructing one of the younger servants in the art of blackleading a mud-scraper. Suddenly, without any warning, one of the dogs left Bellamy's side and leapt at the girl. She screamed and fell back, the dog on her worrying her shoulder. At that moment the butler stooped, lifted the hound without an effort, and flung him a dozen yards down the grassy slope. With a yelp of fury the dog came back straight at the man.

Bellamy made no attempt to interfere. He watched, fascinated, the tiger leap of the great hound. And then he saw an amazing thing happen. As the dog left the ground for his leap, the butler stooped and jerked up his arm so that it struck the under-side of the snapping jaw and closed it. There was a thud as he struck with the other fist—the dog was shot half a dozen yards away and fell exhausted.

"What have you done to that dog?" demanded Abe angrily. "If you've killed it——"

"He's not killed, he's winded," said the new butler. "I could have killed him just as easily."

Abe looked the man up and down.

"You've got a hell of a nerve to beat my dog," he said.

"You've got a nerve to complain about it being beaten, after the attack it made upon that unfortunate girl," said

Digitized by Google

the butler. "If you had whistled the dog he wouldn't have jumped."

Abe listened aghast.

"Do you know who you're talking to?"

"I'm talking to Mr. Bellamy, I think," said the butler. "You employed me to look after your staff, not to feed your dogs," and he turned on his heel and walked into the hall to comfort the frightened and weeping girl.

Abe made to follow him, but, changing his mind, continued his walk. He came back looking for trouble and sent for Savini.

"Where's Philip?"

"He's with the girl that was bitten by the dog, sir; she's hysterical."

"Fire her!" roared Bellamy. "And tell that dude butler that I don't pay him to go fooling around with the girls. Send him here!"

Presently Philip, the butler, came.

"Now see here, whatever your name is, you can pack your grip and get out, and you can take your girl with you."

"I haven't any particular girl," said the butler pleasantly, "but if there was any woman in this place for whom I was in any way responsible, I assure you she wouldn't be here at this moment. Wait, Mr. Bellamy," he said, as the other jumped up in his rage, "you're not dealing with Valerie Howett now, and you're not dealing with her mother."

He saw the colour fade from Bellamy's face. It was not fear; it was blind, insane rage that was possessing him.

"You can't threaten me as you threatened them—that is my point."

"You—you——!"

"Keep your distance. You're an old man, and I don't want to hurt you. That is outside my duty."

"Your—duty?" almost whispered Abel Bellamy.

The butler nodded.

"My name is Captain James Featherstone. I am a Commissioner of Scotland Yard, and I hold a warrant to search Garre Castle and, if necessary, to take you into custody for the illegal detention of a woman known as Elaine Held."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXII

The Search

Abe Bellamy did not seem to understand, and Featherstone repeated the words.

"You're a policeman, are you?" said the old man at last. He was perfectly collected. The man's command of himself was admirable. "I don't know anything about your warrant, but I guess you've got authority to act. I warn you, Featherstone, or whatever your name is, that I'll make you suffer for this. I am an American citizen——"

"The woman we are seeking is also an American citizen," said Featherstone sternly.

He opened the door, and to Bellamy's surprise and indignation there were a dozen men standing in the hall.

"Raiding me, eh?" he said harshly. "Well, go ahead and see what you can find."

Featherstone held out his hand, palm uppermost.

"Your keys," he said.

"I'll see you——"

"I want your keys. What is the use of making a fuss, Mr. Bellamy? We have to go through with this."

Bellamy threw a bunch of keys on the table.

"Now I think I'll have the key that you keep on your chain."

For the fraction of a second the big fellow was motionless, and then he unfastened the chain and threw him the key.

"What does this open?"

"The safe," snarled the other. "You don't want any guiding around, do you? Maybe you'd like me to tell you where the safe is?"

"I can save you that trouble," said Featherstone coolly.

He walked to the side of the fireplace, caught one of the projections of the panelling, and pulled. A space as big as

Digitized by Google

an average door slid back, revealing a black-painted steel surface. He inserted the key, turned it twice, and, pulling the recessed handle, opened the door. The safe contained a number of shelves, filled with steel boxes. There were no books, but on top of one of the boxes was a leather folder.

"Have you the keys of these boxes?"

"They're not locked," said Bellamy.

Featherstone carried a box to the table and opened it. It was filled with papers.

"I think you had better go to your room, Mr. Bellamy," he said. "I shall be some hours here. You will consider yourself under arrest for the time being."

He expected some resistance on the part of the old man, but Abel Bellamy was no fool.

"When you're through, perhaps you'll let me know. I hope you're a better policeman than a butler." With which parting shot he walked out of the library, and was escorted to his room by one of the detectives from the hall.

Box after box was emptied of its contents and carefully scrutinised. Turning out one of the deed-boxes, which at first appeared to contain nothing more interesting than particulars of old and profitable contracts which Bellamy had carried out, Featherstone suddenly called his assistant.

"Jackson, come here."

Sergeant Jackson crossed to his chief.

"What is this?" asked Featherstone.

It was a baton about fifteen inches in length and covered with three broad bands of felt. So thick was it that Featherstone's fingers hardly met. From one end, as he held it up, dangled lengths of whipcord, twice the length of the handle, the ends of each cord being bound tight with yellow silk. He ran the cords through his fingers; there were nine in all, and they were mottled with dark stains.

"What do you think of that, Jackson?"

The sergeant took the whip in his hand.

"A 'cat-o'-nine-tails,' sir." He looked at the butt. There was a faded red label, stamped with a crown, and the words "Property of the Frison Commissioners."

Digitized by Google

"A gift from Creager," said Featherstone, "or I'm a Dutchman."

He looked at the cords. The stains were very old, and his professional eye told him that this weapon had only been used once, for there were still kinks in the cords where they had been folded when the whip had come new from the prison authorities' hands.

He could only marvel at the mentality of the man who would keep this gruesome relic, treasuring it as a souvenir, gloating over it for the pain it had caused to some suffering wretch. He put down the "cat" and turned his attention to the other boxes. He hoped, indeed expected, to find something which would enable him to trace the missing woman Held, but there was no line to her—nothing that gave him the slightest clue. Only one bundle of private letters seemed to have been preserved by Abel Bellamy. They were letters from a man who signed himself "Michael," and they were addressed from various towns in the United States. Three of them had been sent from Chicago, but the majority had come from New York. The first letters dealt with the difficulties that the writer had in maintaining his position. He was evidently a school teacher. He was, even more obviously, Abel Bellamy's brother. The first letters were couched in an affectionate and friendly vein, and Featherstone was able to trace not only the career, but something of the change of attitude of the writer. Michael had apparently got on in the world and made money. In Cleveland he was a real estate man, and from real estate he seemed to have passed into the brokerage business.

Suddenly the tone of the letters began to change. Michael Bellamy was in difficulties and was relying upon the help that his brother could give. Too late he discovered that the brother whom he trusted, and to whom he looked for sympathy and assistance, was behind the organisation which was ruining him. The most significant letter of all was the last. It ran:

Digitized by Google

"DEAR ABEL,

"I am stunned by the news you have sent me. What have I ever done to you that you should so cold-bloodedly set yourself out to ruin me? For the sake of my boy, will you not, at this the eleventh hour, help me to stave off the claims which are pouring into my office?"

For the sake of the boy! Poor Michael Bellamy could have made no vainer appeal, could have said nothing which was more likely to inflame Abe's lust for injury. Abe Bellamy struck at those he regarded as his enemies through their children. Thus he had broken Mrs. Held. Was it likely that this remorseless man would be moved by his brother's appeal?

After three hours' inspection of the letters Featherstone restored them to the safe. By this time his men had reported one by one. Every nook and cranny in the castle had been examined. The dungeons had been searched, but had revealed nothing.

Jim sent for Savini; the olive face of the man was pale, and his lips drooped pathetically.

"This is going to get me in bad," wailed the Eurasian. "The old man will think that I knew all about you."

"Well, didn't you?" said Jim with a smile. "Don't worry. If he says anything, you can tell him I terrorised you into keeping your mouth shut. You'll have to clear up your tarnished reputation with Spike Holland. I understand you swore that I was not the new butler. You behaved nobly," he said ironically and clapped his hand on the sloping shoulder of the other. "Now you can dash madly up to Brother Bellamy and tell him that we'll give him as near a clean bill of health as a man of his character would know what to do with."

Abe Bellamy came back to the library at his leisure, triumph in his eyes, a near approach to a smile on his huge face.

"Well, have you found—Mrs.—what is her name?"

"No, she isn't here, unless the plans of the castle are all wrong and there's a secret room that we haven't seen."

Digitized by Google

"You bet there is," sneered the other. "I guess you've been reading detective stories, Mr. Featherstone. It is bad for you—gets ideas into your head. You'll hear from my lawyers in the course of time."

"I'm glad to know you employ anybody so respectable," said Jim. "Your keys——"

His hand was extended toward the desk and he was in the act of dropping them when he heard a cry and stiffened.

They all heard it—Bellamy, Julius Savini, and Jackson, the detective. It was a thin tremor of sound like a baby's fretful wail that rose and fell and ended finally in a shuddering sob.

It came from nowhere and filled the silent room with its quivering agony—the agony of a woman.

"Oo . . . oo . . . oo!"

Jim Featherstone heard, and hearing, his heart stood still.

"What was that?" he asked hoarsely.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIII

Jim Explains

Abe Bellamy was staring into vacancy. Slowly he turned and faced his questioner.

"The water-pipes, I guess; they make that kind of noise when we set the radiators going."

Jim waited to hear the sound repeated, but it did not come.

He looked hard at Bellamy, but the man met his gaze without flinching.

"What is under here?" he asked, pointing to the floor.

"Nothing—the dungeons start under the hall. There used to be a stairway down to them, but that has been bricked up."

Leaving the library, Jim made a personal search of the dungeons, penetrating to the lower chambers, without, however, making any discovery. The prison chambers extended to beneath the hall. He saw the remains of the stairway to which Bellamy had referred.

Spreading the old plan of the castle upon the floor, he made a rough calculation.

According to the plan, the library stood on solid ground —though this might mean nothing, for he had already detected a number of inaccuracies in the plan, which had evidently been prepared rather from information received than from an actual survey. For example, the lower dungeons were not shown at all.

He was engaged in his examination when he heard a faint sound, and, looking up, he saw a black iron pipe fixed in an angle of the vaulting. He waited, and presently heard it again—a throaty moan. It was not the same noise as he had heard before, but it was quite possible that Abe Bellamy's explanation was correct.

Disappointed, he returned to the library, to learn that the moan had not been heard again.

Digitized by Google

"Have you arrested that water-pipe?" asked the old man facetiously. "Anyway, I'd be glad to have you pinch the bum plumber that fixed it, Mr. Featherstone."

Jim smiled, though he was in no mood for mirth.

His men were streaming back across the park toward the lodge gates, and he was the last to leave.

"Say!"

Bellamy was beckoning him back.

"You've forgotten something, haven't you?"

Jim put down the bag he was carrying, which contained the modest kit he had brought to the castle.

"I don't think I have," he said.

The old man put his hand into his pocket and took out a banknote.

"Take that," he said, and thrust it into Jim's unwilling hand. "Your wages," said Mr. Bellamy sardonically.

"That's one on me," said Jim, and pocketed the five.

In the village inn he met Spike, and the reporter had something bitter to say about the perfidy of Julius Savini.

"I asked him if it was you," he said, "and the mean little skunk swore that he'd never seen the new butler before!"

"He meant 'professionally,' Spike," said Featherstone, taking his arm and walking him toward the Blue Boar. "Anyway, I'm responsible for the lie he told. I gave him explicit instructions that he was to tell nobody, and one of the first persons I mentioned whom he *wasn't* to tell was you."

"Did you find anything? I knew there was something doing when I woke up this morning and found the Blue Boar filled with respectable-looking men in big boots. The worst thing about a policeman is that he always looks like one," said Spike. "You can dress him like the Prince of Wales, or you can put him into a tramp's outfit, but the part of his clothes where his head sticks out always shouts 'copper!' Did you find anything?"

Featherstone shook his head.

"Nothing," he said; "that is, nothing that betrayed the whereabouts of Mrs. Held."

"Who is Mrs. Held, anyway?" asked Spike instantly,

Digitized by Google

and Jim began to realise that here was a story that was more precious than police information and could not go out.

He explained as best he could, without mentioning Valerie Howett, and Spike whistled.

"A prisoner! Gee! That's a fine story if I could use it. Say, Featherstone," he wheedled, "can't I just mention the fact that the police thought there was a female in the cold, dark dungeons of Garre?"

Jim Featherstone thought not.

"If the old man makes a fuss it will be bad enough. There is always a chance that he won't want to move in the matter. If you publish particulars of this raid he is certain to bring an action."

Leaving his bag at the Blue Boar, he shook off Spike and went on to Lady's Manor. Valerie was in her bedroom, and through the window she saw him coming up the path and ran down to meet him.

"Valerie, I've lost a good job."

"Has he found you out?" she said in dismay.

"No, he hasn't found me out, and unfortunately I haven't found him out either. We raided the castle this morning and conducted a very thorough search. I got the warrant down this morning. You know, in England we can't search private premises except on the authority of an order signed by a magistrate. That arrived by the early post, and Scotland Yard sent a dozen men to the village before I was up. I am afraid I shall have to see the Green Archer at a distance."

She looked at him quickly.

"Have you seen him near at hand?" she asked in a low voice.

"No," he replied, astonished. "I didn't tell you I had. He was certainly in the castle on the night of your little escapade—I mean, later in the night."

How could he pretend that he knew nothing of the Green Archer!

"Jim"—her voice was quiet—"I want to ask you something. Did you, for some purpose of your own, because you were watching Bellamy or were engaged in your police

Digitized by Google

work, did you ever masquerade as the Green Archer? You did once, didn't you?"

His look of amazement was not assumed.

"Never," he said. "I wouldn't dream of such a thing, even for the purpose of scaring the old man. There was nothing to be gained."

"But you said you'd never seen the archer? You saw him the night you picked me up."

He frowned at her wonderingly.

"I don't know what you mean. When the old man loosed the dogs after you I was making a little inspection of my own. I was taking the temperature of the ground around the castle wall. Don't look surprised—I'm not joking. Really, it was one of the most serious occupations that I've ever engaged in. I guessed it was you immediately the dog started off in pursuit, and I ran as fast as I could in its track."

"Then it was your feet I heard following the dog?"

He nodded.

"I lost sight of you and the dog too. Presently I came out into the open and I saw the dog lying dead and you by its side. There was no sign of an archer. In fact, I didn't notice at the time that the dog had been killed by an arrow. My first thought was to get you to safety, and I lifted you up and carried you back to the wall of Lady's Manor; I guessed there would be a ladder there. It took me quite a long time to get you over that wall and into the house. I was putting you comfortable when the sleeve-link broke; my cuff caught against the head of the sofa, and I spent ten minutes looking for the pieces."

She smiled faintly at the recollection, for the maid had found the floor covered with burnt matches. She knew who the offender had been, and guessed why those matches had been struck.

"I went out again into the grounds and had the good fortune to get into the castle through the front door—which saved me a climb," he added.

She drew a long sigh of relief.

"Then you're not the Green Archer?" she asked.

"Good heavens, no! I am a butler in disgrace, and

Digitized by Google

maybe I shall be a police officer in trouble, but I'm not a Green Archer."

"You found nothing about——?" She did not finish the sentence.

"Nothing," he replied, "nothing that affected you. I found some letters from his brother, but that was all." He conveniently omitted any mention of the cat-o'-nine-tails—it was not a pleasant thing to tell a woman.

He went back to the Blue Boar soon after, trying to decide in his mind what would be the best course to take. His car was garaged in the next village; it was the means by which he made his daily visit to London during such slack periods as enabled him to slip out through the castle gates, leaving Julius to cover his absence. Mr. Bellamy allowed his butler one clear day's holiday a week, and it was Savini's job to explain, if Featherstone was asked for, that that was the day he had chosen.

He had been in the castle when the tea-party was in progress, but he had thought it discreet to keep away from the library while Spike Holland and the girl were present. It was only when Valerie was alone with the old man that, by a pre-arranged signal, Savini had shepherded Spike into his room and left the coast clear for the new butler to interfere, as it proved, at the psychological moment.

"I have decided to return to London, but I shall be here off and on, and I'm keeping a room at the Blue Boar. You can do a little unofficial police work, Spike, and notify me if anything out of the ordinary happens. I'm leaving a man here."

"To watch Bellamy?"

"No," replied Featherstone, "just to—look around."

"To watch Miss Howett," said Spike shrewdly.

On the way to town Jim Featherstone considered from another angle the problem which Abe Bellamy offered. There was danger ahead; of that he was sure, and it was danger for Valerie Howett. He could not help associating the visit of Coldharbour Smith with that contingency, and one of the first steps he decided to take was to pay a visit to the Golden East.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Golden East

The Golden East had once been a reputable club, the membership of which was confined to officers of the mercantile marine who were in the Indian trade. Because no club can live upon the takings from so limited a membership, its qualifications had been extended until it included almost anybody who could, by a stretch of imagination, describe himself as being interested in the China trade. Even this stage of the club's life was ancient history. Gradually it had fallen from its dignified estate, and when the conditions were altered to admit a mixed membership the Golden East went rapidly on its downward course.

Coldharbour Smith had come into the club at its intermediate stage, and, being alive to its possibilities, had purchased a controlling interest, which had still further extended until he became sole proprietor. And probably at no period in its history had the club been quite so prosperous. Strange things happened in the Golden East; offences were committed against all laws regulating the conduct of clubs, which would have justified the police in closing the establishment again and again. But the Golden East served a very useful purpose from the point of view of police headquarters. It was the sink into which strange flotsam floated. Its very immunity from the attention of the police gave more help to headquarters in the arrest of wanted men than if the place had been closed.

Coldharbour Smith was certainly liberal in his *largesse*, and was quite under the impression that his judicious gifts to certain local members of the constabulary were responsible for his freedom from any serious interference. He would have been a surprised man if he knew that the money he slipped into the hands of a local detective-inspector every Saturday went to the Police Orphanage and was duly acknowledged by the officer in charge of the fund.

Digitized by Google

The club had originally occupied a small corner shop and the rooms above, but had gradually grown until it had become a considerable establishment. The ground floor was used as offices. It was on the first floor that the real premises began, extending to a long windowless attic under the roof, where a little game was generally in progress throughout the night.

To the big dance-hall on the first floor came a curious collection of people. Actresses from the West End, young men about town who desired the novel sensation of mixing with the underworld, a few Chinamen, not a few negroes, and always a very plentiful supply of well-dressed women who apparently had no other occupation in life than attendance at the club. Off the dance-room was the bar, and here Coldharbour Smith could usually be found in his tight-fitting check suit, his invariable white derby, and the cigar that never left his face.

At midnight the fun was usually at its greatest. The theatres up west had closed, more fashionable visitors were beginning to arrive; the coloured waiters, in their smart liveries, were dashing from table to table supplying the newcomers' needs, and the band was at its most exuberant phase. Situated as was the club in the midst of a squalid, poverty-stricken neighbourhood where men, women, and children lived like cattle and starved as cattle would never have been allowed to starve, the presence of the club, its gaiety, and the magnificence of its patrons, were a pathetic source of pride to the ill-clad people who stood, shivering in the street, to watch the cars and cabs drive up.

The Golden East was fashionable. Visitors to London "did" it in the same way as they "did" the slums and the cathedrals and the Cheshire Cheese and the Temple Church.

The laughter and noise was at its greatest, a syncopated band at its most violent, when Jim Featherstone came through the hall and, with a nod to the doorkeeper, went up the carpeted stairs. The doorkeeper pressed a bell-push unostentatiously, and by the time Jim had reached the dance-room something like silence reigned. The orchestra had stopped, the dancers had gone back to their tables,

Digitized by Google

with a pleasant thrill in the case of those who were unused to the place, for Coldharbour Smith had uttered the magic word: "Police!"

"Glad to see you, Captain." Coldharbour came half-way across the ballroom and offered a jewelled hand.

"Quiet tonight, Smith."

"Why, yes," said Coldharbour, "but nothing unusual. We don't make much noise here."

Jim had made a swift and professional scrutiny of the company.

"Very respectable lot of people you've got tonight. Who was at that table?"

"Oh, some fellows who went out half an hour ago."

"And left a bottle of wine untouched, with the bubbles still rising? And four nice glasses all fizzing up?"

"Anyway, they're nobody you know, Captain," said Coldharbour. "They're some swells from the West End. I suppose they didn't want to be seen here."

He edged for the bar-room, and Jim Featherstone followed.

"Going to have a drink, Captain?" Coldharbour Smith cast a quick glance at his jacketed barman. "We don't often see you down this way. We've got a few regular sea captains in tonight." He jerked his head in the direction of a little group about a table in the far corner of the room. They were shabbily dressed men, and obviously foreigners. "I have quite a lot of sailors here," Coldharbour Smith went on. "I guess they like to come and see the old place that they knew years ago when it wasn't quite so lively."

"Perhaps they do," replied Jim dryly. "And perhaps they only come to get their orders."

"Orders, Captain?" said Coldharbour Smith, elaborately mystified.

"I wonder how many cargoes of bad whisky you've shipped to the United States, Smith? Take that look of injured innocence off your face, my man; we know you've been rum-running for a year."

"It isn't all it might be," complained Smith. "We've had two cargoes pinched and thrown overboard."

Digitized by Google

"Then the Western ocean must be filled with dead fish," said Featherstone. "But anyway, I haven't come to worry you about that; it is not yet an offence to poison America."

"I'm only an agent," said Smith—which was true. "I make very little out of it. It is these big fellows that rake in the dough. Going to have a drink, Captain?"

"I think not," said the visitor. "I came here for a little quiet talk, Smith. Have you a room where we can be alone?"

There was a room at the back of the bar apparently, and he followed the proprietor of the Golden East through the barkeeper's private domain and into a small room. As Coldharbour switched on the light, Jim raised his delicate nostrils and sniffed. Then his cold eyes fell upon the uncomfortable Coldharbour.

"Cut out smoking, Smith," he said sharply. "We'll stand for a lot, but—cut out smoking."

"It was one of those Portugooses," said Coldharbour hastily. "My manager let them come in here; I don't allow a pipe on the premises, I swear to you, Captain. It was done when I was out, and as soon as I knew I kicked the man out of the club."

"That may be true or it may be a lie, but don't let it occur again. Now!"

He pulled up a chair and sat down, leaning his arms on the table, and looking up at the watchful man.

"You were at the castle the other night?"

"You mean Garre Castle—Mr. Bellamy's place? Yes, that's true, Captain, I was. I've been there twice lately to see Mr. Bellamy on a matter of business. However did you know that?" he asked innocently, and Jim smiled.

"The old man's been on the telephone to you today, telling you that I raided the castle this morning. Don't deny it; we had a man at exchange listening in."

It was the sheerest bluff on Jim's part, but there was an air of expectancy about the place when he had arrived, and he guessed that the old man must have warned his tool to expect a visit.

"I certainly was talking to Mr. Bellamy on the 'phone

Digitized by Google

this morning over a private matter," admitted Smith, and seemed inclined to talk about something else.

"What is your business with old man Bellamy?"

"He's been a good friend of mine," said Coldharbour glibly. "Lent me a lot of money to buy this place."

"You didn't save his life, I suppose—didn't jump into the water and pull him out?"

"No, sir, I didn't," admitted Coldharbour Smith. His tone was gracious and his manner unexceptional, yet there was a cold, snaky glint in his eye which told Jim all he wanted to know.

"So he lent you the money? You're very grateful, and now I suppose you are paying him back? By the way, Smith, where did you live before you came here? I haven't looked you up in the records."

"I lived in this neighbourhood for a little while," said the man sullenly. "I used to live in Camden Town."

"What part of Camden Town?" asked Jim quickly.

"Little Bethel Street."

"Little Bethel Street!" Jim was on his feet, his finger pointed accusingly. "You knew Mrs. Held!"

"I never heard of Mrs. Held." Smith's denial was loud "What do you mean, Captain? Who is Mrs. Held, any way?"

"You knew Mrs. Held, and you helped spirit her away."

Smith's face had gone a shade paler.

"Now, come across, Smith. I'll make it right for you if you tell. If you don't"—he brought his fist down on the table—"I'll shut the Golden East in a week."

To his astonishment a smile dawned upon the unhealthy face of the man.

"That won't worry me, Captain. I've sold the Golden East and got half the money." He slapped his pocket. "If you closed it, it wouldn't hurt me that much!"

He was speaking the truth—Jim saw that at a glance.

"Anyway, Captain, what's the good of roasting me? I'm straight; you've got nothing against me. I try to live friendly with the police, and if I don't it isn't my fault. Have a drink, Captain."

Digitized by Google

There were three happenings that had not escaped Jim Featherstone's notice. The first was the quick glance that the man had given to his barman, the second his insistence upon Featherstone having a drink, though he knew Jim had been there before and that such a request had been invariably refused. As Coldharbour Smith had taken a sidelong look at the barman, the man in white had signalled with his eyes to somebody in the room, and, following the direction of his glance, Jim had seen a man whom he had not noticed before and who must have come in after him. But for that event he would have interviewed Smith in a more public place.

"What's the idea?" he asked. "That drink idea of yours. You know I never take anything here."

"Aren't you going to be friendly for once?" grinned Smith.

There was a telephone on a shelf in the corner of the room. Jim had seen it when he came in.

"Do you mind if I call a friend of mine?" he asked suddenly.

Smith hesitated.

"This 'phone's out of order," he said.

"Let me see," said Jim coolly and picked up the instrument.

Almost immediately he received the signal from the exchange and gave a number. He saw Smith standing in the center of the room, biting his nails nervously, and he understood dimly just what was happening.

"Who is it? The sergeant in charge at Limehouse? Captain Featherstone speaking. I am at the Golden East. Yes. . . . I want four men to meet me outside the club at once. Thank you."

He hung up the receiver. And now Smith's perturbation dispelled any doubts he might have had.

"You had arranged a little party for me outside, hadn't you, Smith?" he bantered. "I saw the man who followed me in and gave you the tip that I'd come alone. What was it going to be—an unfortunate street fight, in which I was involved? Too simple, Smith."

Digitized by Google

With a nod he passed to the door and turned the handle. The door was locked and he spun round.

"I expect my barman locked it," said Smith huskily. "There's another way out, Captain."

He opened a door and disclosed a stairway.

"You'll find a door at the bottom, Captain——" he began.

"Suppose you find it," said Jim pleasantly, and the man accepted the invitation with alacrity.

He ran down the stairs ahead of the detective and opened the door. Jim saw the grey oblong of light and the outline of Coldharbour's figure against the wall.

"Good night, Captain," said Smith loudly.

"Good night," said Jim.

He made as though to pass the master of the Golden East, and then, with a sudden twist, caught the man by the collar, and before he could say a word had thrown him through the open doorway. Scarcely had Smith staggered into the street when somebody hidden in the shadow of a wall struck at him twice with a loaded stick, and Smith fell with a groan.

Instantly Jim was in the street, following the flying figure of the thug. In twenty yards he had overtaken him, and with a quick kick at his heels, an old rugger trick, had sent him sprawling. Jim gripped him and jerked him to his feet.

"I'm going quietly," growled the man, dropping his weapon with a clatter. "This ain't my job. Coldharbour Smith hired me to hit a man when he came out of the club."

"At this present moment, my friend," said Jim, "Coldharbour Smith is wishing that he hadn't!"

He dragged his prisoner to the light of a street lamp and jerked up his chin, bringing his face into view. As he expected, it was the man who had followed him into the club. The recognition was mutual. The man wilted in Jim's grasp.

"Coldharbour'll kill me for this," he wailed.

They found Mr. Smith sitting up, nursing a wet and painful head, and to the exchange of recriminations which

Digitized by Google

followed Jim listened with interest and a certain pleasure.

"If you say I told you to wait for this gentleman, you're a liar," said Smith, "and when I get my hands on you I'll beat the life out of you, you dirty little river-shark. Lock him up, officer!"

"Lock him up!" sneered the other. "If you ain't pinched, Smith, it is because you've got the police straight. You'd look fine in gaol, you would, you crimping hound!"

Smarting under the treachery of his employer, the assailant grew more and more violent in Jim's hand.

"You wouldn't have any drinks here; you wouldn't have no Valerie——"

The words were scarcely out of his lips before Jim jerked him round.

"What's that?" he asked sharply.

"Valerie Howett—Mrs. Smith to be," screamed the prisoner, and Jim felt his blood go cold."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXV

A Warning to Smith

"Don't you take any notice of him, Captain," said Smith hoarsely. "He's mad, he always has been mad—he was in an asylum."

And then suddenly he broke into a torrent of words addressed to the prisoner. He was talking Yiddish, and under that fierce flow of words the prisoner became silent.

"That will do, Smith," said Featherstone sharply. "If you want to talk to this man, speak in English. Now, my friend, you're going to explain what you mean by mentioning that lady's name."

"I was only joking," said the prisoner.

"I have a very keen sense of humour," said Jim between his teeth, "but I'm not laughing. What do you know of Miss Howett?"

"Don't know anything, sir," he said.

"Except that he saw the name in the newspapers," said Smith eagerly. "I tell you, he's dippy, Captain. You've been in a lunatic asylum, haven't you, Isaacs?"

"That's right," agreed the other with relish. "I'm not quite responsible for what I say."

By this time the four policemen he had sent for had arrived.

"Take this man to the station, charge him with common assault. I'll come along and see him."

When they had taken the prisoner away he turned to Smith.

"Smith, I guess you've been praying for trouble for a long time, and your prayer is in a fair way to being answered. When I've finished with this man I'm coming back to see you."

"You don't scare me, Captain," said Smith, his hand to his bruised head.

Digitized by Google

"It isn't a question of your being scared, it is a question of your being killed. Keep that in your nut," said Jim.

He followed the policemen to the station and had the prisoner lodged in a cell.

"Isaacs told the truth, Captain Featherstone," said the sergeant in charge. "He is a little mad. He's been in and out of an insane asylum as long as I can remember."

"What is his record?"

"A very bad one. He's been at the Old Bailey three times—assault and robbery. Of late he's been working at the Golden East. Coldharbour Smith has practically kept him."

It was a fairly hopeless proposition, thought Jim. Evidently Smith had warned him in Yiddish not to talk, possibly promised him some reward. He was certain it could have been no accident, that reference to Valerie. Mrs. Smith! What devilish work were they contemplating, this evil old man and his vicious servant?

Going down to the cell with another police officer, he interrogated the prisoner, but from the first it was waste of time. Isaacs was a little wry-necked man with a low, receding forehead, who was not only mentally deficient, but was cunning enough to employ that deficiency to suit his own purpose. He met Jim's questions with a blank stare.

"I can't remember having said anything about—what's the lady's name? . . ."

"It is hopeless," said Jim, returning to the charge room. "I don't know whether it is worth while holding him. And anyway it is Smith's business to charge him. If he doesn't come along, release him."

Smith had no intention of charging his handy man, and said so frankly.

"I lost my temper with the little devil. Wasn't it enough to make me lose my temper when I knew that he was waiting there to cosh you? Thank heavens," said Mr. Smith virtuously, "that he hit me and not you!"

"You touch me deeply," said Jim. "And now we will discuss Miss Valerie Howett and the reason Isaacs associated her name with yours."

Digitized by Google

They were back in the little room behind the bar, but this time there was a policeman stationed at the door below and another in the front hall.

"I know no more than you what he meant. These lunatics are very curious people—they get hold of names——"

"Change your mind, Smith," said Jim with dangerous quiet. "You're sane at any rate."

"Captain, I know nothing; I've never heard the lady's name before. I can't help what Isaacs said, can I?"

"Isaacs said what you must have said when you were drunk, Smith. You're in danger. You can take that smile off your face, because I don't mean the danger that you mean. I'm not thinking of the danger of imprisonment. I can put you behind bars just when I want. You think you're safe because nobody troubles you. You're a fool; there is no safety for a man like you. One doesn't even have to frame up anything to get you. You're in danger"—he raised his finger again warningly—"danger from me, greater danger from one who will have no mercy on you."

The street door closed on the detective, and still Coldharbour Smith remained in the attitude he had been throughout the interview, one hand holding his elbow, the other yellow hand fingering his unshaven chin. Then he opened the door communicating with the bar and spoke a gruff word to the barman.

"Send that dago skipper in," he said. "And you'd better bring a bottle of wine and some cigars. I shall be here the best part of the night."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVI

JOHN WOOD TALKS

IN response to an urgent telegram, John Wood had left his children and come post-haste to London, reporting immediately on his arrival at Scotland Yard. It was Jim Featherstone's first meeting with the philanthropist, though he dimly remembered having seen him seated at the next table at the Carlton the day he lunched with the Howetts.

It was impossible to meet or even to see Wood without being impressed. Men carry in their faces the written book of their lives, and the story that Jim Featherstone read in the smiling eyes of John Wood warmed him towards his visitor.

"I am afraid I have given you a long and uncomfortable journey, Mr. Wood," he said. "But you quite understand that the Commissioner will pay all your expenses, though we cannot compensate you for the loss of what, I believe, is your favourite amusement."

John Wood laughed.

"I gather Mr. Spike Holland has been talking about my babies," he said, "and I more than suspect that he has been telling you a little story which I told him in confidence. Not," he added, "that I object to his telling you; indeed I expected he would sooner or later. You want to see me about Bellamy?"

Jim nodded.

"I want to see you particularly about the child whom you say Bellamy murdered."

Wood had not accepted the chair that was offered to him, but was standing, his hands clasped before him, his eyes far away.

"The child," he said slowly; and then: "What can I tell you? The story belongs to the dim past, and is quite forgotten by everybody but myself, and, I hope, Abe Bellamy

Digitized by Google

—though I doubt very much whether those black records of his ever troubled him seriously."

For a while he seemed to be communing with himself.

"The case to which you refer," he said at last, "belongs rightly to the American police, and I doubt very much, even if I placed you in full possession of the details of this crime —which I am unable to do—whether you could take any action, Captain Featherstone. Bellamy is a man who seems to have employed the wealth that came to him very early in life in breaking down such opposition as was offered to him. I am not suggesting that he was a vicious man in the generally accepted sense of that word. On that side his history is a fairly clean one. The man's god has been power, and to secure power he has never hesitated to employ the foulest methods. Opposition to any plan of his, however unimportant or futile it might have been, roused the devil in him; and when that opposition came from somebody whom he could hurt, his blow was delivered swiftly and surely.

"He has always had one method whenever it was feasible, and that was to strike at his enemies through their children. There are two authentic cases within my knowledge where, to revenge himself for some real or fancied slight, or some act of defiance on the part of those who he thought should have bowed before his wishes, he has set himself to strike back that way. On one occasion the children were grown up, and in this particular case the child was a baby. I shall not tell you, Captain Featherstone, what caused Abel Bellamy's hatred in the instance I am giving you. Indeed, I am not quite certain what was the immediate cause, though I have guessed, and probably guessed rightly.

"One day the child of these people disappeared. The father was frantic, the mother was prostrate with grief. I have reason to believe that some communication passed between the mother and Abe Bellamy, but if that was so the father knew nothing. The child had been taken out by a nursemaid, who came back with an incoherent story to the effect that, whilst she was talking with a friend, the child had disappeared from the baby-carriage in which it had been sleeping.

Digitized by Google

"A fortnight later there was a head-on collision at a place called River Bend. Scores of people were killed—burnt to death. And amongst the débris was found a baby's shoe, which was identified by the grief-stricken father as the shoe which the child was wearing when it disappeared. Witnesses were found who saw a woman carrying a baby into the train, and there can be no doubt that the child was one of many who perished in that terrible disaster.

"The theory formed then was that the kidnapper was on his way to some unknown destination when the accident overtook him or his agent."

"Was this matter reported to the police?"

To his surprise John Wood shook his head.

"That is why I am perfectly certain the mother knew who was responsible for the child's abduction, and, fearing for its fate, withheld the information which might have brought about its recovery. That Abe Bellamy was responsible I have no doubt."

"You're perfectly certain the child was killed?" asked Jim, and the man nodded.

"When did this happen?"

"I am able to fix the date by the date of the accident. In fact, that is the only date I have to go on, for I had to piece together the story with practically no assistance. The child was lost in August, 1890."

Jim's face fell.

"I was hoping to be able to tell you that the child was still alive, but I'm afraid the dates were wrong, unless the old man made a practice of this sort of thing."

"I don't think this was his only offence," said Wood. "It seems a fantastic charge to bring against a reputable man of Bellamy's position, but in the space of five years I have traced two mysterious disappearances, and in each case it was the child of a man who had stood out against him. As I said, the dominant passion in his life has been power. He may be mad, though I have had no corroboration of that excuse."

"Perhaps, Mr. Wood, you will tell me a little more," began Jim, but John Wood of Belgium shook his head.

Digitized by Google

"I am afraid I can't," he said.

"The name of the father of this child?"

"I can't even tell you that," said the other quietly. "You see, Captain Featherstone, I have a certain responsibility in the matter."

Jim turned a page of the little book in which he had jotted down his notes, then:

"We'll go to another subject perhaps a little less dismal," he said with a smile. "You were a friend of Bellamy, the old man's nephew?"

Wood nodded.

"He was killed in air fighting, I believe?"

"He was shot down over Hanover," agreed the other, "during a reconnaissance."

"Did he ever speak about his uncle?"

"Never."

"Had he any grievance against his uncle?"

"He never mentioned any grievance."

"Did you know he was old Bellamy's nephew?"

For a second Wood hesitated.

"Yes, I knew it."

"What kind of man was he?" persisted Jim. "Was he anything like his uncle?"

John Wood laughed softly.

"I could imagine nobody more unlike."

Jim thought a moment, his clasped hands at his chin, his eyes downcast.

"Has it occurred to you, Mr. Wood," he said slowly, "that the younger Bellamy may yet be alive, and that for some reason he is concealing his identity?"

Wood was silent.

"There is that possibility. Many things happened in the war; men were reported dead who subsequently proved to be very much alive," he said at length.

"But you don't agree that it is likely?" said Jim. "You think that if he were alive, you, being his best friend, would know?"

"You forget that I benefited under his will; all his effects came into my hands."

Digitized by Google

Before he left, John Wood asked a question that was on his mind.

"You talked about the dates being wrong, Captain Featherstone. Have you traced some other victim of Abe Bellamy's villainy?"

Jim nodded.

"Will you tell me who it was?"

"I'm afraid I must follow your example and ask you not to press me on that point," said Jim with a smile. "You are perfectly sure that the kidnapping you referred to occurred in '90?"

"There is no doubt at all," said the other. "The accident occurred at a place called River Bend. It was known as the River Bend disaster, and it happened on the twenty-ninth of August, 1890."

John Wood made one call before he caught the afternoon train back to Belgium, and to his disappointment Spike was out of town. Mr. Syme saw the visitor, and Mr. Syme interviewing members of the general public was altogether a different Mr. Syme from that which Spike knew.

"Holland is still at Garre, but I'm withdrawing him to-morrow," he said. "The public interest in the Green Archer has evaporated. He hasn't made another appearance, so I guess the archer is dead. And maybe," he added hopefully, "he will be if I bring Holland back to London."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVII

The Man who Appeared

Julius Savini had a premonition that his stay at Garre Castle was rapidly approaching its end. The old man had not been unusually offensive or fault-finding, and nothing had happened which could be taken as significant of Abel Bellamy's intentions. But Julius had that queer sixth sense which told him that he was going to lose money.

Since the departure of the "new butler" many of that gentleman's duties had devolved upon Savini. It was his business in the morning to open the little door which led to the store-room and admit from the kitchen buildings, which connected with the store-room, the servants whose business it was to clean up and dust, sweep, and scrub. Abe Bellamy's household was arranged to afford him the minimum of discomfort. His library was cleaned whilst he was taking his morning walk through the park—a practice which he followed wet or fine—the bedrooms and corridors were tidied immediately after.

Yet, despite his apparent indispensability, Julius knew that the old man was contemplating a change. Perhaps the uncanny mildness of his manner aroused the Eurasian's suspicion. Having this conviction, Julius Savini began to look around with the idea of making a profitable get-away.

Bellamy kept very little money in the house. He had a small account at a local branch of his London bank, but when he required any large sums it was Savini's duty to take the car to London and collect it. "Large" is a relative term, and so far the sums which Julius had drawn had not been of sufficient importance to justify his taking a risk. Known as he was to the police, with Abel Bellamy having no illusions as to his probity and character, a "steal" must be followed by a get-away, not only from London, but from the country. Julius favoured Brazil, for, apart from the

Digitized by Google

salubrious nature of that vast country, Portuguese was his native language. He had considered the matter very carefully, and had estimated, with all the Eurasian's shrewd judgment, the exact amount that would be necessary to keep him in ease and comfort for the remainder of his life. And that was a sum in excess of anything that he was ever trusted with by his suspicious employer.

Bellamy left to him the filling in of cheques, and he had access to the cheque-book; and when he had finally decided that the time had arrived to make his killing, Julius adopted a plan which had the advantage of simplicity. One morning he took in a bunch of cheques for the old man to sign; they were mostly small tradesmen's accounts, and the last was for the local newsagent and was for a trifling sum.

"Why don't you pay this by cash?" grumbled Abe as he scrawled his signature to the cheque.

He could not guess that Julius had already made up his mind to pay that particular account by cash, and that afternoon, instead of posting the cheque, he called at the store and paid the account. The cheque itself he carefully put away in his notecase, and as the date, the amount, and the name of the payee had been written in ink that faded within three hours of its writing, when Julius again inspected the cheque it was blank save for Abe Bellamy's signature.

That afternoon he went to town and saw his wife.

"Ask Goldberg to fix your passport," he said. "Book your own passage. I think we'll have to travel by different ships. I'll go by aeroplane to Paris and take the German ship from Vigo. I have a friend in Lisbon who will get me a passage and a Portuguese passport."

"What about the flat?" she asked. "I can sell the furniture——"

"You'll sell nothing," he said savagely. "You'd have half the police in London around here making inquiries before you'd sold a davenport!"

"There are four or five hundred pounds' worth of furniture here," she protested, and the thrifty Julius was impressed.

Digitized by Google

"I'll go alone," he said. "Perhaps that will be better. You can join me a few months later. It will be easy for you to slip from the sleuths, go to New York, and work down to Rio. I'll write you to the old place."

The old place was El Moro's, to which many letters, strangely addressed, came every day and were furtively collected.

On his return to Garre, in his room after the house was quiet, Julius took out the cheque from his notecase and made it out for a hundred thousand dollars—Abe Bellamy's was a dollar account, for just about that time the exchange was fluctuating against sterling. As he expected, the first words of Bellamy the next morning were:

"I'll be sending you to town tomorrow to get some money, Savini."

"I might go today," said Julius, remembering that he had dated the cheque that day. "I have nothing much to do."

"You can go tomorrow early," snapped Abe. "Make the cheque out for five thousand dollars."

Julius came back with the cheque, and with it a letter addressed to the manager of the bank.

"What is this?" asked Abe suspiciously.

"The last time I drew five thousand," said the glib Julius, "Mr. Sturges said he didn't like paying out large sums unless he had a covering letter with the cheque."

"They ought to know you by now," complained Abe as he scribbled his signature at the bottom of a letter which authorised the banker to pay bearer the cheque presented.

It was simple, thought Julius, and had a glow of malicious satisfaction as he anticipated the old man's rage when the discovery of the robbery was known. By that time Julius Savini would be beyond the reach of his tongue and his huge hands—especially those huge hands.

So smoothly had his plan succeeded that Savini grew nervous. Suppose the banker telephoned to Garre for confirmation before he paid out the cheque? Suppose the discovery was made before he reached Paris? Julius Savini shivered.

Digitized by Google

In the afternoon Abe Bellamy ordered the car and drove to some unknown destination. Julius guessed that he was meeting Coldharbour Smith, for there had been a call put through to Limehouse that morning, and Abel Bellamy had spent a quarter of an hour behind locked doors. His absence was welcome, for there were many things that Julius had to do—letters that had to be destroyed, clothes that he was leaving behind to be searched, so that nothing was left which would trace him. The last letter had been burnt, the last waistcoat rigorously examined, and he came out of his room into the long corridor wondering if his nerves would give way under the strain of living with Bellamy for the next twelve hours.

At the farther end of the passage, near to the staircase, was the small door through which the cleaners were admitted, and through which the Green Archer had disappeared, leaving a blood-stained handkerchief to mark the way of his flight. The door was opened and closed by Julius since the butler had gone, and he had noticed it standing ajar as he had passed on his way to his room, and had mentally resolved to return and lock up, for after lunch the only communication between the kitchen and the hall was through the service doors opposite the dining-room.

As Julius stood, his mind intent upon his coming flight, he saw the door opening slowly outward, and for a second his heart stopped beating, though it was broad daylight, and there was every possibility that the intruder was a servant who had come back to finish her belated work.

But there was something so furtive, so cautious, in the movement of the door that his mind leapt to the Green Archer, and he stood rooted to the spot. Very slowly the door opened, and then round its edge a man stepped cautiously—a tall, cadaverous, bareheaded man, wearing a pair of horn-rimmed glasses. He could only have caught a glimpse of the dumbfounded figure of Julius Savini, but he leapt back and pulled the door to with a crash. Still, Julius did not move, but stood there open-mouthed, staring at the closed door. The man who had made so dramatic, so inexplicable an appearance, was Mr. Howett!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The Thermometer

It was Mr. Howett! Mr. Howett, who was using the door that the Green Archer had used, who could find his way into the very heart of the castle, despite all Abel Bellamy's precautions.

Julius drew a long sigh, and returned to his bedroom, took out the forged cheque and burnt it in the fireplace. He saw a more profitable and less dangerous course. Howett was a rich man, and Howett would pay!

Then at his leisure he took his keys and unlocked the little door—it fastened with a spring catch—and went slowly down the stone stairs to the store-house. As he expected, the room was empty. The door leading to the kitchen was unlocked, and he passed into the domain of the cook.

"No, sir, nobody's been through there," she said, shaking her head. "The cleaners went hours ago."

He tried the outer door, but that was bolted and barred on the inside. Then he returned to the stone store-room where Valerie Howett's handkerchief had been found. The presence of her handkerchief was a mystery no more. Who but Mr. Howett could have brought it with him, perhaps by mistake? He was a near-sighted man.

It mattered little to Julius now whether or not the old man discharged him. He had a source of income for the rest of his life. Strolling out into the park, he surveyed Lady's Manor with the air of a proprietor, and dreamt dreams of easy money. The sight of a man swinging up the drive from the lodge diverted his attention, and his heart came into his mouth when he recognised the visitor. It was Jim Featherstone.

"Jumping snakes! What are you doing here, Featherstone?" he asked, his roseate dreams suddenly dispelled.

Digitized by Google

"I'm improving the shining hour. They tell me the old man's out, though I expected him to be at home when I left London."

"You can't come into the castle, Captain Featherstone," said the agitated Julius. "I've as good as lost my job as it is."

"So I gathered," said Featherstone.

"So you gathered?" faltered Julius, and Jim Featherstone nodded.

"Savini," he said, "when a man like you begins making inquiries at shipping offices and collecting data about the German ships that run from Vigo to Rio, I gather that you are in imminent danger of being fired and that you are contemplating a change of air and scenery. I can only tell you this, that if Abel Bellamy were the devil himself, it is my job to protect him from robbery, and I warn you, Mr. Savini, that you will be severely scrutinised if you attempt to leave London, either by the prosaic boat-train or the more romantic airway."

Julius could have swooned. What an escape he had had!

"I don't know why you should think these things about me, Captain," he said with an air of injured innocence. "I'm trying to go straight, but you police fellows don't give a man a chance."

Jim laughed.

"That early Christian martyr tone of yours certainly refreshes me," he said. "Now, Julius, you can make yourself useful. I'm looking for something in the garden. I don't want to go into the baronial hall."

"What is it?" asked Julius, his curiosity overcoming his panic.

"The other night I drove a number of spikes into the ground, and I found them all except one. It was the night the dogs chased the Green Archer."

"A spike?" said Julius, thinking for the moment that Captain Featherstone was being facetious. "The only Spike——"

"This wasn't a human spike," interrupted Jim. "I'm not going to explain to you the why and wherefore of it. Help

Digitized by Google

me search. It was in that garden bed close under the wall. By the way, that is the back of Bellamy's library, isn't it?" He pointed to the grey and broken wall.

Julius nodded.

"You ought to know every location by now, Captain Featherstone," he said. "If the old man had any idea that I knew who you were there'd have been trouble."

"Have you got a new butler?"

"I'm the new butler," said Julius savagely. "The old devil is treating me like a domestic servant!"

The search proved to be short in duration. Jim had not been looking for five minutes before he saw the dull gleam of steel, and, scooping out the earth, he drew up the bar he had planted.

"What is it?"

"It is a thermometer, and the temperature is forty degrees. I can tell you that before I look at it," said the detective.

He wiped the mould from the glass-shielded face of the instrument and examined the record. Then he whistled.

"Eighty degrees!" he said, half to himself.

There was no doubt on the matter. The instrument was self-registering, and a thread of scarlet touched the eighty line.

"Eighty degrees," he repeated, and looked at the puzzled Julius. "The earth here, Savini, is forty degrees hotter than the earth in any part of the grounds—which I think," he added, "accounts for the gas bill."

"But what does it matter, anyway?" asked Julius. "And how does the gas bill come in? You don't think that he is heating the ground.

"That is just what I do think," said Featherstone.

He examined the thermometer again. The actual temperature stood at fifty-five, but at some period between the placing of the indicator and its recovery the thermometer had been subjected to a heat of eighty.

"I cannot understand what this is all about, Featherstone," said Julius irritably. "What have I to tell the old man when he comes back?"

Digitized by Google

"You'll tell him nothing," was the suave reply. "You'll maintain that discretion which so admirably distinguished your conduct when I had the honour of sleeping under the same roof as you."

Julius was saved the necessity for lying, for even as Featherstone turned to go Abe Bellamy's car swept up the drive, and the big fellow jumped out almost before it was at a standstill.

"Got another—what do you call it—warrant?" he asked. "Glad to see you Captain Featherstone. What I like about England is the way people call without invitation. What's that?" he demanded sharply.

Without a word Jim handed him the long steel rod, and the old man frowned at it.

"A few nights before I left your employ, Mr. Bellamy, I took the liberty of going round the castle grounds planting instruments very similar to this. They each contained a self-recording thermometer, and all except this, which I did not find, showed a ground temperature of forty degrees. The last thermometer shows eighty.

Abe Bellamy did not move a muscle.

"Maybe you've found a volcano," he said, "or a hot spring. Are you thinking of gaoling me because the ground is hot?"

"I only remark that it is curious."

Abe laughed harshly.

"I hate to disappoint a clever fellow like you, Featherstone," he said, "but if you'll make inquiries at the lodge you will find that, with true American thoroughness, I had hot water laid on for the use of the keeper. You have struck the hot-water pipe—that's the second pipe you've had!"

He chuckled as if he was enjoying a good joke at the expense of the detective.

"All the same," he went on, "I'm mighty curious to know what you thought you'd found."

"I certainly did not expect to find a hot-water pipe driven through a twelve-foot way," said Featherstone.

The old man's explanation was a perfectly logical one,

Digitized by Google

and he felt that for once Abel Bellamy had scored. Inquiries at the lodge, which he did not hesitate to make, confirmed this statement.

He confessed his failure to a sympathetic Spike Holland.

"I don't exactly know what I expected to find," he said, "except that, if this gas was used, it was employed somewhere out of sight. Whilst I was at the castle I had an opportunity of examining the meter, and more gas is used in Garre Castle than the stoves or the range can account for."

"I want to report one thing," said Spike, when they had exhausted the problem of the gas. "A stranger has arrived in the village since you left. He's lodging at a cottage near Lady's Manor, and I've seen him wandering about the road at night in the vicinity of Mr. Howett's house."

Featherstone laughed.

"I expect you have," he said dryly. "He is one of my men, whom I left here to keep a watchful eye on the proceedings. Unfortunately the Commissioner is withdrawing him today," he said more seriously. "We're rather shorthanded, and I could offer no reasonable excuse for keeping him on. It is up to you, Holland, to help me all you know how," he said. "I will let you into my confidence to this extent, that I believe Miss Howett is in very grave danger. The nature of that danger I cannot tell you, because I don't know. I do know this, however, that for some reason, which is beyond me, Bellamy has conceived a bitter hatred toward this girl; and unless I am greatly mistaken he is plotting some harm to her. If you're willing to stay on I'll see your editor and put you right with him. I can tell him enough to make him realise that there's still a big story to come out of Garre Castle. And if you stand by me I'll see that you get it."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to spend most of your days in bed and most of your nights somewhere within reach of Lady's Manor."

"Is it the archer you're looking for?"

Featherstone shook his head.

"I'm not worrying about the archer," he said. "He can

Digitized by Google

look after himself, and I'm satisfied that he means no mischief to Miss Howett. The archer I'm watching is Coldharbour Smith, and believe me he's more dangerous to my peace of mind than the most deadly bowman that ever wore green!"

As he drove back to town that evening he stopped his car on the crest of the road that runs up Garre Hill and looked back. The grim outlines of the castle were silhouetted against the wine hues of the west, menacing and sinister. What secret did those walls hold, he wondered? What tragedy lay hidden? That its mystery was not yet revealed he was certain.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIX

The Grey Lady

At eight o'clock that evening a maid pushed into Abel Bellamy's study the wheeled table on which his huge meal was laid. She placed it in the clear space behind his desk, set a chair, and with a frightened "Your dinner is served, sir," made her escape.

Abel Bellamy, who did not seem to notice her presence, started at the sound of her voice and growled something under his breath, which she did not hear. He walked slowly to the door and locked it; then, without sitting at the table, began to arrange food on plates. When he had finished he approached his desk and pushed it until it was clear of the rug on which it stood. This he rolled methodically, exposing the parquet flooring beneath.

From a desk drawer he took a small vacuum cup, the presence of which had often puzzled Julius. He pressed it on one of the small wooden squares that made the pattern of the floor, and it lifted, exposing a small keyhole. Into this he turned the key he carried on his chain. Then, gripping the edge of the wood, it came up in the form of a trap door with a regular edging, so cunningly devised that the shape of the trap could not be detected when it was in place. Beneath was apparently solid stone flags, into which a small gun-metal lock had been fitted.

Again he used the key, and, putting his foot on the stone, pressed. Balanced on a steel axis, it half turned, revealing a flight of stone stairs. He went back to the table, took a plate in his hand, and walked into the chamber beneath. Although it was dark, he made his way to a bench, where he put down the plate, and, striking a match, lit a gas-jet. At the far end of the room was a door, which he unbolted with one hand and pushed open.

In the direction he was now moving he was outside the

Digitized by Google

walls of the castle; indeed, the door through which he passed was built in the foundation of the wall, which was so thick at this point that, when the door opened, he appeared to be walking through a short tunnel. Beyond was a large room, out of which were two smaller apartments. The room was illuminated by six gas-jets that burnt behind opaque globes. It was the most remarkable room in the castle, with its massive stone pillars and the sombre vault of its roof. It had been furnished regardless of cost. Beautiful rugs covered the stone floor, priceless tapestries hid the walls, and easy chairs and couches were plentiful. On a small table was a great silver vase, in which a few blossoms drooped. Every article of furniture in that room Abel Bellamy had carried there himself, smuggling them in one by one.

He put down the plate on the table and looked round. The room was empty. He went to one of the doors and pushed it open. It was fitted up as a small kitchen and was completely equipped. Beyond, through an open door, he caught a glimpse of a long bath, and with a grunt came back to the main room.

"Elaine!" he called sharply, and a woman came slowly from the third room.

She wore a shapeless dark gown and her movements were slow and listless.

"Here's your dinner," barked Bellamy. "Do you ever think what'd happen if I forgot you, eh? Suppose I dropped dead?" He rumbled with laughter at the thought. "Who'd find you? You'd starve down here, Elaine. In hundreds of years' time—thousands perhaps—they'd find you and put you with one of those old queens—eh, Elaine?"

She had heard this so often that she gave it no attention. The only sign she gave that she had heard him at all was when she slowly pulled a chair to the table to sit down. He watched her as she ate, almost mechanically. Eight years of solitary confinement were written in the transparent pallor of her face.

Yet not all her trials, not the humiliation to which she had been subjected daily, the insults and taunts, the studied

Digitized by Google

brutality which Abel Bellamy had imposed upon her, had broken her spirit or brought a line to that singularly beautiful face. She might have been a woman of thirty, and the grey in her air was the only betrayal of a greater age.

He stood against one of the big pillars, his arms folded, looking down at her.

"I saw Valerie today, Elaine Held," he said. "She would have sent her love if she had known. She'll be a happy bride in a month, my dear. You remember Coldharbour Smith?"

The woman looked up.

"I don't believe you when you tell me that you have seen Valerie, or that she is anywhere near. It is just a lie of yours. Everything you told me has been a lie."

"Do you know Coldharbour Smith?" he repeated.

She did not answer, but the hand that carried a glass of water to her lips was shaking.

"You had better remember him," he said, raising his voice threateningly. "I thought you'd be seeing him again soon. There's been a fly cop nosing round the castle, and when you were in your tantrums the other day he heard you! Yes, ma'am, he was standing right over your head and heard you squealing." He laughed, a sound that echoed through the subterranean chamber. "A clever lad, he took the temperature of the ground and found your kitchen. He's been guessing right, but I fooled him."

Still she made no reply. He was so used to these silences that he had ceased to be irritated, and he went on:

"Valerie's lovely. Yes, ma'am, that girl is Elaine Held all over again—the same eyes, the same hair, the same damned stuck-up ways. They're marrying in a month."

She got up from her chair with a sigh, looked at him steadily for a second or two, and then:

"I think of Valerie as dead," she said.

"You're a fool and you always were a fool. You had a chance when I wanted to marry you. I don't want to marry you now."

"That is the kindest thing you've said to me. Oh, God, I wish I were dead!"

Digitized by Google

She covered her face with her hands, and her body shook.

"Why don't you die?" said the old man contemptuously. "Because you're a coward! Why don't you die? It is easy. Turn on any of these gas faucets and go to sleep. You've got knives—can't you sharpen them?"

"I don't want to die that way. I will live to see you punished for all the evil you have done in the world, for all the sorrow you have brought to human hearts, Abe Bellamy."

Up went his lips to show his teeth. He moved swiftly toward her and caught her by the shoulder.

"You're afraid of death!" he said, glaring into her face. "I'm not! I look for the day when I shall be stricken down—me up above, and you down here, nobody dreaming of you! That will be a good thought to take with me. And when they carry me out of the castle they'll walk over your tomb, Elaine, and they won't know, and you won't know, and I shan't know!"

She shivered.

"You aren't human!" she muttered.

Abel released his hold of her, took up the plate, and balanced it on the palm of his hand, looking at her speculatively.

"They'll never find you," he said, speaking to himself, "never! I'll keep you here. If I took you away I'd only bring you back again."

Abruptly he turned from her and went through the door, slamming it and thrusting home the bolt. He took the plate that he had set down, brought it up the stairs, and replaced it on the table in his library. Then the stone slab swung into its position and held with a click.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XL

The Archer

The hounds of Garre were now kennelled in an ancient shed that had held the hunting dogs of the de Curcys in the days when Columbus was a child playing in the streets of Genoa. Abe Bellamy had laid down a rule for their feeding. Their last meal was in the early afternoon; after that they were left hungry, by design. A hungry dog was a wakeful dog, argued the old man, and a savage dog too. It was he who gave them their morning food; usually he found them sitting in a solemn line before his bedroom door, their intelligent faces turned up at him.

"You're going to town tomorrow, Savini. I want you back early. You're married, I hear?"

"Yes, sir," replied Julius, wondering from whence the information had come. Featherstone, he knew, had not told. Then the explanation flashed on him. Coldharbour Smith, a man to whom the loyalties were unknown!

"Pretty smart kind of wife you've got, they tell me," said Bellamy, looking at the secretary from under his shaggy brows. "A good-looker, huh?"

"Yes, sir," said Julius, wondering what was coming next.

"Smith has a fine job for her," said Bellamy, returning to the survey of an illustrated newspaper. "I guess you won't mind her making money—honestly?"

Julius overlooked the insult, in his curiosity to discover what the old man was driving at. This was indeed an unexpected development, though he did not for one moment imagine that his employer was acting the part of disinterested friend. That was not Bellamy's way.

"I'm very glad to hear you say that, sir," he said deferentially. "Fay is a good girl and knows nothing about the life I lived——"

"Don't lie; she was one of your gang." Julius cursed the informer silently. "If she was honest I shouldn't have any

Digitized by Google

use for her. At least, Smith wouldn't. Write to her, Savini —no, see her. You are going to town tomorrow. Drop in and talk to her. Tell her that if Smith wants her help she's to give it. She'll be paid well. Tell her that."

His characteristic head-jerk terminated the interview. Julius went to bed after seeing the old man on his way to the kennels. He never waited for the arrival of the dogs.

In a few minutes Bellamy was back, his famished hounds at heel. They waited expectantly whilst he barred and bolted the door, then followed him up the broad stairway. At the entrance of his room he stopped to look round. One dog was stretched at the head of the stairs, the others were sniffing at the door of Savini's room.

In the castle silence reigned. The ticking of an old clock in the hall could be heard even by the sleepless Julius, turning over in his mind the mystery of the old man's sudden interest in Fay. It was past midnight when he heard the soft patter of feet in the corridor, and, from one of the dogs, a low, sustained growl.

Bellamy heard it too and was instantly wide awake. He got up from bed and looked out. The dogs were pacing restlessly up and down the passage, and, seeing him, one repeated his growl.

"Shut up!" snarled the big man savagely, and with a "woof" the hound lay down, his paws extended, his eyes on his master's face.

Abe closed the doors and locked them, and in a few minutes was asleep.

Two o'clock was chiming when the door leading to the store-room opened stealthily inch by inch. So slowly, so noiselessly, that a dog lying a dozen yards away did not look round. As slowly the door closed again, but on the floor near to the wall was something that had not been there before—a large bowl of milk. The first to see it was one of the dogs that had been wandering about the hall below, and the sound of his noisy lapping brought his companions.

The hungry beasts gathered about the bowl, their heads buried in its depth. Soon the bowl was empty, and one by one they strolled off to lie contentedly, licking the spots of

Digitized by Google

milk that had fallen on their paws. The first of the hounds to find the milk stretched himself, his head between his paws and his eyes closed. Then almost simultaneously the second and third of the dogs lay over on their sides. Five minutes passed, and a green figure slipped through the door, went swiftly to the head of the stairs where the switch controlling the hall lights was concealed; a touch, and the corridor was in darkness.

Silently he moved, stooping to lift one of the dogs to the side. The dog half opened his eyes, and the green man patted him and smoothed the silky ears. The animal was asleep again in a second.

In the faint light he stood motionless outside Abe Bellamy's room. Slim and terrifyingly tall he looked. The bloated white face was grotesque and appalling in its immobility. In one hand he held a long green bow, a full quiver hung at his side, the green feathers of their butts shimmering. He waited for a long time, then, stooping, he thrust a thin, long-nosed instrument into the keyhole. Attached to the handle was a thin wire which ran into the quiver. He gripped the end of the key and turned it. He made no sound, even as he twisted the handle and drew the door wide open, revealing the leather-covered inner door. Again the instrument in his hand was applied, this time to the end of the iron rod which ran through the door and served at its other side to retain the catch when it rose. Whatever the instrument was, it must have been highly magnetised, for its current acted through the iron bar, lifting the catch sufficiently to allow the door to be pushed open. . . .

When Abe Bellamy woke, the phosphorescent figures of the clock at the side of his bed pointed to a quarter-past four. He had grown accustomed to looking at the doors to see whether they were open. They were, he noted, shut, and he lay down again. Moving his pillow to make himself more comfortable, he heard a faint jingle of steel, and got out of bed with a curse to retrieve his key chain, which had fallen to the floor.

He did not go to sleep again, but lay thinking, and his thoughts were not pleasant.

Digitized by Google

Valerie Howett! She would be asleep now, and even into her dreams, he thought, no hint of her danger would come.

Here, in one respect, he was wrong. Valerie Howett was at that precise moment very much awake.

To all women, at some period of their lives, comes the realisation that their lives, hitherto free and untrammelled, are in the keeping and largely in the disposition of others. The knowledge is sweet, but it can irritate also. And it is all the more irritating when no definite claim has been made to this mastership and relationships are still vague and uncertain.

Valerie Howett had reached the stage with Jim Featherstone that, whilst any serious talk of love or marriage was not entertained, she felt so far bound to him that, if any man had proposed marriage to her, she would have regarded herself as engaged.

Yet no word of love had passed between them. She did not even know if he was free to marry. She tried to settle the matter in her mind by reviewing the circumstances under which she had become acquainted with the Police Commissioner, but abandoned that line of examination when she realised that, in all probability, Jim Featherstone was interested in her only as "a case." He had been asked by her father to take a professional interest in her, and probably his interest was still professional, despite that queer thrill in his voice when he had bade her good-night at the gate. She turned her mind to the more flattering speculation.

It seemed a very long time since she had seen him last, though in point of actual fact it was only a matter of hours; and it was because she missed him with such unaccountable poignancy that she was angry with herself and deliberately tore up the letter she had been writing to him. There was another reason. Such letters to Jim Featherstone as she had written had a tendency to length. She found herself writing on the tenth page before half her thoughts were expressed. He could not possibly be interested in her every movement, she told herself as she ruefully surveyed the torn pages reposing in the waste-paper basket. It was when she discovered that she was beginning the letter all over

Digitized by Google

again that she resolutely put out the light and went up to her room. Mr. Howett had retired earlier than usual, and she left a servant to lock up, and went to bed a little dissatisfied with her own inconsistency. For somehow the search for Elaine Held had lost some of its urgency, and she could not understand why.

Her room was in the front of Lady's Manor, overlooking the strip of garden. Beyond the hedge which bordered Lady's Manor was the road. The detective who had guarded the Manor had been withdrawn. Looking from her window, she saw a man strolling along the centre of the road, and caught the gleam of his cigar. She smiled inwardly, knowing that it was Spike Holland who had taken upon himself her guardianship. And this thought of Jim's care cheered her.

Usually she slept well, but this night she tossed and turned for an hour before she fell into a fitful sleep. Twice she wakened, and the second time decided to get up and heat some milk. She looked out into the deserted road; Spike was not in sight. She hoped he had gone home to bed. Pulling on her dressing-gown, she found her slippers and lit a candle, and she had opened the door of the room when she heard something which made her blow out her candle. It was the sound of voices, whispering voices, and they came from below.

Her heart was thumping painfully as she crept to the balustrade and looked down into the hall. There was nothing to be seen, but the voices were distinct, and somebody was crying softly. She was not dreaming; she pinched herself to make sure. Should she arouse her father? Her hand was raised to knock at his door, but she hesitated.

Again came the whispered colloquy from below, and that undercurrent of soft weeping which did not cease. It could not be a servant; if any of the servants had been taken ill in the night the girl would have come to her.

She turned the handle of her father's door and went in, moving her hand in search of him. The bed was empty! She could not believe the evidence of her senses. She struck a match with trembling fingers and lit the candle. The bed

Digitized by Google

had not been slept in. His pyjamas lay neatly folded on the pillow.

She was bewildered and then relieved. It must have been Mr. Howett she had heard. Probably a maid had come to him.

She carried the candle down the stairs, and at the first sound of her foot, soft as it was, on the staircase, the whispering and the sobbing ceased. She went straight to the drawing-room; the sounds had come from there. She tried the door, but it was locked.

"Who's there?" she asked quickly, breathlessly.

No answer came for a moment, and then she heard the whispers again, and:

"It is father, Valerie."

"What is the matter?" she asked with a sigh of thankfulness.

"I'm seeing a friend; I will come up to you," was the hesitant reply.

"But who is it, daddy?" she asked in surprise.

"Please go to bed, dear." Mr. Howett's voice was urgent. "I don't want the servants aroused."

Reluctantly she turned and made her way back to her room. Who was the friend who called at this hour of the morning, and why had her father not gone to bed? It was so unlike him. He was a man of routine, who had never done anything unusual within her recollection. She always thought of him as one who hated mysteries, and here he was participating in the greatest mystery of all. She could not understand it; it was so unlike him. Nevertheless, she was glad that his was one of the whispering voices; but whose was the other?

She sat on the edge of her bed, her door open, listening. Presently she heard the sound of somebody coming from the drawing-room and the click of the lock as the front door was opened. Curiosity got the better of her, and she stole softly to the head of the stairs and looked down. Fortunately she was holding the rail, or she would have fallen. For there, in the centre of the hall, dimly illuminated by the light which came through the open door, was the Green Archer!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLI

Doubt

One glance she gave at that sinister figure, and then she turned and fled to her room, locking the door behind her. It was incredible, impossible, outside the bounds of reason. Her father! And who had been his visitor?

She heard the soft purr of a car, but did not get up to look. Instinctively she knew that the stranger had gone and that it was the stranger whose sobs she had heard. But Mr. Howett—the Green Archer! Her brain whirled.

She sat with her head in her hands, and did not stir when she heard him go to his room and close and lock the door.

Valerie went down early to breakfast. She had a headache and was feeling dead tired, but she was anxious to hear what explanation her father offered—she could not think of him in any other way but as her father—for the happening of the night. She must not even so much as hint that she knew his secret, she told herself; and when he came in to breakfast she greeted him as though nothing had happened.

"Your visitor kept you very late, daddy," she said as she seated herself opposite to him. He looked pale and ill; evidently he had not slept either.

"Yes, Val," he mumbled, not meeting her eyes. "I promised I'd come along and see you last night, didn't I? I . . . well, I had rather a shock. I wonder if you would mind if I did not discuss it?"

"Of course I don't mind, dear," she said with a cheerfulness she did not feel.

"I expect you were a little frightened," he said, reopening the subject himself some time later, "and that's just the thing I didn't want to happen. Did you go into my room?" She nodded. "And found the bed empty. Well, that must

Digitized by Google

have worried you, dear. I would give a lot of money not to have had you wake up."

"Was it anybody very important?"

"Very important indeed," he answered gravely. "Valerie, I don't like the way these eggs are served."

It was an old complaint of his, and one which he invariably employed when he wished to change a breakfast-table subject.

"I am going to town today," he said when the meal was over. "There's a man coming from Philadelphia I want to see pretty badly, and perhaps I'll be late returning."

He was so full of explanation for his visit to town that she knew that he had not told her the real reason. But she did not question him, and to all appearance saw nothing extraordinary in his conduct, even though he must have remembered that he told her, only the previous day, that only illness would take him away from his history.

In one sense she was glad that he was going. There were some questions she wished to ask the servants, and perhaps a close scrutiny of the drawing-room would reveal to her the identity of the visitor.

He left immediately after breakfast. Spike, seeing him go, hurried to the house.

"Nothing wrong, is there, Miss Howett?" he asked anxiously.

"What a question for the Howetts' guardian angel!" she smiled, and Spike made a wry face.

"Your guardian angel sat down in the shelter of a hedge and fell into a state of coma." Then, seeing her look of alarm, Spike stated in plainer language that he had fallen asleep. "I ought to be in bed preparing for my duty," he said, "but the truth is that the days are so full of interest that I never think about retiring until it is nearly time to go on patrol. There is trouble in the castle."

"What has happened?"

"The Emerald One got busy last night, and when old man Bellamy woke up this morning he found his dogs sleeping off the effects of an almighty jag they'd had in the night."

"Drugged again?" she asked in surprise.

Digitized by Google

Spike nodded.

"I've just seen Julius. He says the old man's keeping those dogs in his room in future, and he's just raising Cain! Had all the servants up, questioned and cross-examined them, and talks about calling in the police."

"Poor Mr. Savini must be in a terrible state of mind," smiled the girl sympathetically.

"As a matter of fact, he isn't," replied Spike. "I've never seen him so pert and lively. Treated the whole thing as a joke, and says he wishes the Green Archer had poisoned the dogs instead of doping them. Your father's out very early, Miss Howett."

"Yes, he has an appointment in London."

"So has Julius," prattled Spike. "By the way, I've been on the 'phone to Featherstone this morning."

"Mr. Holland, did a car pass you very early this morning?"

"Yes," he said instantly, "it was that that woke me up—a two-seater Delarge, all hooded up though it was not raining. I wondered where it had come from so early. Why?"

"I saw it passing my window. It woke me up too," she replied untruthfully, and the interest faded from Spike's face.

"You didn't see who was driving it?" she asked.

"I caught a glimpse. It was the head-lamp that woke me up; and you must be a pretty light sleeper, Miss Howett, because it was less noisy than any big car I've seen for a long time. What struck me was that it was a woman driving, somebody in a long cloak. I saw her only for a fraction of a second."

"There was nobody else in the car?"

"I wouldn't swear to that," said Spike. "Why are you asking me this, Miss Howett?" he demanded suspiciously. "Nothing happened at Lady's Manor last night?"

"Nothing," she said hastily. "Only I wondered who it was that would be driving at that hour of the morning."

Spike out of the way, she began the tactful questioning of the servants. They added nothing to her knowledge. Nor did the drawing-room yield any clue to the identity of the

Digitized by Google

visitor. Should she search her father's room? Loyalty to the man whose love had first saved and then cherished her made her reject that plan, and she was reduced to the confirmation which her own eyes had given her.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLII

Fay Has an Offer

Early as was Julius, Fay Clayton had a visitor before the arrival of her husband. It was not a visitor that she had cared to see, for Coldharbour Smith's reputation was not of the best.

"Julius isn't in," she said; "he's away in the country."

"Don't I know it?" said Coldharbour. "Isn't he staying with a friend of mine—Mr. Bellamy?"

"A friend of yours!" sneered Fay. "Well, I like your nerve, Smith! Anyhow, I can't let you in. I have a reputation to lose."

"Forget it," said Mr. Smith. "I've got to have a word with you. I've come all the way from Limehouse to put good money in your way, and I want to help Julius too. It will pay you, Fay, to let me come in."

She opened the door a little wider.

"Come in," she said curtly. "But you are not staying long, Smith, and I have a cook and a maid in the kitchen," she added significantly.

"So far as I am concerned, you can have the Archbishop of Canterbury," said Coldharbour in an injured tone. "I've come to talk business. What's more, Julius will be here in a quarter of an hour."

"How do you know?" she asked in surprise. "Have you seen him?"

"No, Bellamy's sent him to town, and he has told him he can have a little time off to see his wife."

"Does he know?" she asked in dismay.

"Of course he knows," said Mr. Smith contemptuously. "A gentleman like Bellamy knows everything. It's only me that has kept Julius in his place. When Bellamy found out the kind of character he was he wanted to fire him, but I said——"

"Let's talk business," said Fay wearily. "It's too early

Digitized by Google

in the morning for fairy tales. As a matter of fact, Julius told Mr. Bellamy himself."

Smith guffawed loudly.

"Then we're both liars," he said, "for Bellamy found out without any assistance, either from me or from Julius. But that's nothing to do with it. Fay," he said, lowering his voice and leaning across the table, "I can put four hundred in your way—for doing practically nothing."

She eyed him steadily.

"You wouldn't put four cents in anybody's way for doing nothing, Smith," she said. "What do you want? I'll do nothing crook—understand that. If you want anybody jollied along you must find some other girl to do it, because I'm out of the game for good."

"Ain't that fine?" said the admiring Smith. "It does my heart good to hear you, Fay, because I am out of the game myself. The job I want you to do is as straight as——"—he looked round helplessly for a simile—"well, it's straight. Do you know that girl Howett?"

She nodded.

"She's a nice girl, eh? You had a fuss with her at Moro's."

"There wasn't any fuss," said Fay calmly. "I just said 'How do you do?' to her, and that was all there was to it."

"So I've heard," said the sarcastic Smith. "I go to Moro's, you know, Fay, and they tell me things. Still, that doesn't matter. I'm going to have a joke with Featherstone. By all accounts he's sweet on her; at any rate he's generally hanging around the Howetts' house, and he's the kind of slick fellow that would think that he was good enough for anybody."

"What's the joke?" interrupted Fay.

"Well, it's like this," said Smith slowly. "Suppose you went along and called on this girl—you can go down in a swagger car, because there's no limit to the expenses we'll allow you—and you had a talk with her. She'll see you straight away because she knows who you are. Now, this is the part"—he raised his finger warningly—"that you're not to tell Julius."

Digitized by Google

"I always tell my husband everything," said Fay virtuously.

"Perhaps you do, and perhaps you don't," said Coldharbour Smith. "But this is a thing that you don't tell him. Do you understand that?"

"Well, let me hear what you want," repeated Fay impatiently.

"You're to go down there and see her as a friend," said Smith, speaking rapidly, for he had been late in arriving, and every moment he was afraid that Julius would come in. "This girl Howett is looking for somebody—a woman. She's not all right here"—he touched his head—"and she's got an idea that her mother is somewhere around Garre Castle. As a matter of fact, her mother's dead, but that's neither here nor there. What I want you to do is to see her and tell her that you've seen Mrs. Held—remember that name—at the Golden East. Tell her that she's kept there very secretly, and that you only saw her by accident. Tell her that you know a private way into the Golden East, and that you'll take her there any night she likes. If she talks about seeing Featherstone, you can tell her that, if she brings in the police, there's a dozen ways of getting Mrs. Held out of the club, and she'll never see her. Remember to say that."

"What is going to happen to her?"

"Nothing will happen to her. You'll just bring her to the club, and maybe we'll arrange a little dance and a bit of supper——"

She shook her head.

"I'm not in this," she said. "Anyway, it's a low-down trick, if the woman she's looking for is her mother, whether she's mad or not. And I'll bet she's not mad! What's going to happen to her when she gets to the Golden East? I know your crowd, Smith. I wouldn't go to the Golden East myself unless I had a man I could trust with me."

Smith sat back in his chair and scowled at her.

"You can tell Julius that the job I want you to do is to fool Featherstone. You needn't tell him that you know what the plan is."

Digitized by Google

"I don't know whether I'm speaking plainly enough," said Fay, "but I repeat that I'm not in this job. You must find another woman."

"I've found you, and you'll do it," said Coldharbour Smith. "What are you frightened of? No harm will come to the girl. It's a joke, I tell you."

"I've got a pretty good sense of humour, Smith," said Fay decisively, "but I haven't yet come to the part of your story where I laugh."

"If Savini told you to do it——" he began.

"If Savini, or a hundred Savinis, asked me to play a dirty trick on a girl, I wouldn't," said Fay. "That's final, Smith. Here's Julius."

He heard the closing of the door, and presently Savini came in. He was surprised, and by no means pleased, to see Coldharbour Smith.

"I've been talking to your wife, Julius," said Smith. "Maybe you can knock some sense into her. I want her to do a little work for me. There's good money attached to it —four hundred."

"Bellamy said five hundred," said the practical Julius; and to the girl: "You'll do it, won't you, Fay?"

She shook her head.

"Not for five million," she answered, and Julius knew from her tone that she was immovable.

"Talk it over," said Smith, rising to go. "And don't forget, Fay——"

"Mrs. Savini," said Fay sharply. "I've got a lawful handle to my name; make a little use of it, Smith."

"*Mr.* Smith!" he snarled as he went out.

Julius did not speak until he heard the door slam behind the visitor.

"The old man wants you to take on this work, Fay," he said. "What is it?"

"It's pretty muddy work, Julius," answered the girl quietly, "and it's just a little too muddy for me. I don't mind soiling my hands a little so long as I can see the colour through the dirt. I won't tell you what Smith wanted me to do, because I half promised I wouldn't

Digitized by Google

and anyway no good would come of your knowing."

He was biting his nails thoughtfully.

"I won't press you," he said, a little to her surprise, for she had nerved herself for a quarrel. "I guessed it was something that you wouldn't care to do, though I wasn't prepared to find you feeling so strong against it."

"You've changed your plans, Julius, about going away?" He nodded. "Couldn't you get the money?"

"I had it in my pocket," he said cheerfully, "but a steady income without risk is better than a lump sum. Besides, Featherstone knew all about my preparations for making a get-away. I didn't tell you in the letter for fear it should be opened, but he knew I was making inquiries, and even the line I intended travelling by. He's a clever fellow, Featherstone," he said with reluctant admiration.

That he did not press her for particulars of Coldharbour Smith's scheme was not remarkable. This queer couple had made a tacit agreement not to inquire too deeply or closely into the affairs of each other. It was an excellent arrangement, which at times saved both from considerable embarrassment. He could tell by Fay's tone that Smith's suggested scheme had not only been an impracticable but an unwholesome one; he knew Fay and her many phases very well indeed.

Julius Savini was an utterly unscrupulous adventurer, a thief without remorse, a swindler with whom conscience and police inquiries were synonymous terms. But he loved this slight woman, an associate of thieves from her very childhood, brought up in an atmosphere of crime, and graduating under the ægis of Baldie Clayton, her criminal father; and in his heart he had planned for her a life, not only luxurious, but free from anxiety. It was that ambition of his which had made him choose the less risky and, to his mind, more justifiable, method of blackmail in preference to accepting the risks attendant upon the big steal.

"I'll get back now," he said. "I've left the old man a raving lunatic. That fellow was there last night."

"The Green Archer?"

"Why he comes I can't guess," said Julius, shaking his

Digitized by Google

head. "It's the maddest fool thing that any man ever did, and if he was caught—phew!"

Fay turned sharply.

"What are you blowing about?" she asked curiously. "Anyone would think you didn't want him caught."

"It's very likely I don't," said Julius.

"Honest, Julius, it isn't a fake of yours, this Green Archer?"

"Of mine?" he repeated contemptuously. "Do you think I'd go fooling about with those dogs? Not likely! Not for all the money that old man Bellamy has." And Julius spoke only the truth.

After he had taken his departure, Fay was called to the telephone, and recognised the voice of Smith.

"Did you talk to Julius?"

"Yes," laconically.

"Are you going to be sensible?"

"I am," said Fay with a grim smile. "I'm just the most sensible woman in this city."

"Then you'll do it?"

"Not on your life I won't do it," she said emphasising every word.

"Then Julius will lose his job," said the savage voice at the other end of the wire. "And you'll get yourself into bad odour anyway. You're doing Savini the worst turn ever, Fay, and I like the boy so well that I was going to put him right in reach of easy money. I wasn't going to ask you even to soil your hands."

"That's right," she agreed. "It was a mud bath you were asking me to take," and she slammed down the receiver on the hook.

She did not in any way underrate Coldharbour Smith's powers of mischief. She had never lived in security, and her mental attitude was one of alert defence. It was against her code to interfere in other people's games, but she had serious thoughts of warning Valerie Howett of the danger ahead of her. So strong did this feeling become that eventually she called up Garre, only to find that Lady's Manor was not connected by telephone. She remembered

Digitized by Google

Julius telling her about Spike Holland, and had the call put through to the Blue Boar. But Spike was out and was not expected back for an hour. There was nothing she could do, unless——

She shook her head irresolutely. She would write to Valerie, telling her all that Smith had suggested, and leaving it to the girl to take her own measures for protection. In justice to Fay Clayton it may be said that the idea of getting into touch with James Featherstone was a hateful one. To inform a possible victim was one thing, and under certain circumstances permissible. To squeal to the police would have placed her outside the pale in her own estimation.

Valerie was at the village post office, which was also the local telephone exchange, waiting to buy some stamps, when the postmistress appeared from the exchange room.

"Why, miss, there's been a call through for Lady's Manor. I've just cut them off. They wanted Mr. Holland at the Boar, but he was not in."

"Who was it?" asked Valerie curiously.

"It was a lady's voice speaking."

Valerie was puzzled. She knew half a dozen women, but none who was likely to call her up at Garre. Such friends as she had knew that the house was not connected by telephone, and, moreover, the switching of the call through to Spike suggested that the matter had to do with the castle.

Jim Featherstone, of course! It was probably his typist who was getting the call.

"May I have a London number?" she asked, and in ten minutes was talking to Jim.

"No, I didn't ring you, Valerie," he said; "and there are no ladies in my department. Who do you think it was?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. I thought it must be you because she tried to find Mr. Holland. Have you heard from him?"

"Yes; about the drugged hounds, you mean?"

"It's queer, isn't it? Don't you think it is queer enough for you to come down to make a personal investigation?"

"I was coming tomorrow. Would you like me to come

Digitized by Google

tonight?" he asked, with such eagerness in his voice that she went crimson.

"No, tomorrow will do," she said hastily, and ended the conversation.

Who else could it be, she wondered as she walked back to Lady's Manor. Not the weeping woman—and yet, who was she? She asked herself the question a hundred times, she thought that, when her father returned, she must, for the sake of her own peace of mind, ask him to reveal that much of his secret.

As she passed the gates of Garre Park she saw Abe Bellamy walking across the green toward the castle entrance. His back was to her, but there was no mistaking his huge bulk. As though instinctively aware of the scrutiny, he span round with a quickness that was surprising in one of his size, and courtesy made her nod to him. He gave no acknowledgment; he did not so much as raise his hand to his soft cap, but glared at her until she was out of sight.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLIII

The Empty Dungeon

Julius found him in the park on his return. For once the old man seemed to be anxious to see him, for he held up his hand and stopped the car half-way up the drive, and Julius got out.

"Have you seen your wife?" he barked.

"Yes, sir, I saw her."

"Is she going to do what I—Mr. Smith wishes her to do?"

"No," said Julius boldly, "she says she doesn't care for the job."

"I suppose you know that means I'm going to fire you?" threatened Bellamy.

"I shall be very sorry, sir——" began Julius.

"Give me the money," growled Bellamy, and the secretary counted into his hand the notes he had drawn from the bank.

Julius was near the entrance to the hall when Abe called him back.

"Did your wife tell you what Mr. Smith wanted?"

"No, sir," said Julius.

The old man's eyes searched him.

"That will do," he said.

He had ordered his dinner early, for that day he had gone without lunch. It made little difference to the grey woman. She had a supply of canned food which helped to keep her alive when, as sometimes he did, Bellamy spent days without making a visit. Once he had purposely allowed her emergency supplies to run out, and had kept her two days without food—a piece of malice which, to his annoyance, she had passed without comment.

If the castle was the apple of his eye, then this secret prison of his was its very core. With his own hands he had furnished it, with his own hands connected its gas-supply

Digitized by Google

and installed its ventilation. To introduce electricity involved too many dangers. A short circuit would bring prying electricians to the castle; the wires could not be as well hidden as was the other means of illumination. He had worked a week to connect one of the old chimneys of the main building with this subterranean room and provide a constant supply of fresh air.

Dinner was brought in at six, and was of the usual proportions, and Julius, who superintended the placing of the table, withdrew. This time the old man ate his dinner first, before he loaded the tray for his unfortunate guest. His mind was on the Green Archer. How wonderful it would be to capture him and thrust him down that Little Ease down below ground-level, and clang the steel gates fast in his face and leave him there to eat out his heart year after year and at last to die all unknown. The stone trap from the upper dungeons could be cemented down. He could be left there until madness came to him. . . . Abel Bellamy breathed more quickly at the thought. Who was he? He had suspected Julius at first; then he had thought it might be that prying policeman Featherstone. Or was it a woman? Was it Valerie? That would be a sweet revenge. He would make a newer dungeon for Valerie, on the lower level. He shook his head; the other way was best. Smith! He chuckled heavily as he rose and pushed back the writing-table.

He was taking his time tonight, for he was not in the mood to be hurried. The parquet flooring came up on its concealed hinges; he snapped back the lock in the stone and set it swinging on its axle. But even then he did not descend the stairs. He was trying to get Valerie Howett right. What was best—that Smith should take her? . . . He did not trust Smith, and was he to trust him to the extent of making life a hell for that daughter of Elaine Held?

Balancing the tray, he went down into the dark, lit the gas, and opened the door. As he placed the tray on the table he called the woman by name, and this time he went straight to her sleeping-room and kicked open the door.

Digitized by Google

"Here's your food. Answer me when I call you," he roared.

Only the echo of his voice came back.

"Elaine!" he shouted. Had she followed his advice—had she died? Had she sought, in the turned gas faucets, a way out of her imprisonment? He could not smell gas.

He pushed open the door of the kitchen. It was empty. The bathroom—empty. He ran from room to room like a madman, chased round the pillars as though she were concealed behind one of them, threw over the settee with a crash, ran back to the door and peered out.

"Elaine!" he screamed. But Elaine was not there. The grey woman had gone!

Where was she? She must be there, she must! There was no way out. The walls were solid. There were none of the secret doors and passages in which they had told him Garre Castle abounded. He had tested every stone, every flag in the worn floor.

He ran into the bedroom and pulled the bed away from the wall. Perhaps she was hiding there to frighten him. But the bed was empty; there was nobody there. Her meagre wardrobe was hanging on two pegs that with difficulty had been driven into the wall.

He sat down dully, his head in his hands. The grey lady was gone. But where? How could she get out? There was only one way, and that was by way of the library. Even if she had got through the door. . . . But she couldn't pass that way. The door was bolted. The Green Archer . . . the Green Archer again! The Green Archer could not have passed through the floor. No other key would turn that lock. It had been made especially by a German lockmaker, that and the safe, and the same key fitted both—that tiny key that sent steel arms crashing into their sockets, and held the stone immovable.

He carried the tray back to the library and examined the stone trap before he closed it. There was no suggestion, not so much as a scratch upon its surface, that it had been forced. The key had no duplicate; it was impossible that the grey woman could have gone that way.

Digitized by Google

It was nearly nine o'clock when he came out of the library, and Julius stared at him, for in three hours the man's whole appearance had changed. He was hollow-eyed, grey of face, horrible.

"Get me a connection with Limehouse," he said. "And tell Sen I want him—here."

Julius wondered. Never before had Sen, the chauffeur, crossed the threshold of Garre Castle.

Sen was by birth Chinese. Abe Bellamy had found him when he was on a flying visit to Seattle—a lank, inscrutable man, who had been trained at the American Mission in Hankow. He had the curious quality of understanding four languages and speaking none, for he had been dumb from birth. It was this latter advantage, more than Sen's erudition, which secured him a job; Abe had paid for his training in a motor-school, and had maintained him in his employ for eighteen years. He lived over the garage that Bellamy had built in an extreme corner of the park. Here he lived frugally and cleanly, occupying such time as the big Rolls did not claim in the translation of the "Lun Yii"—that book of books—into English. What wages Sen received, nobody but Bellamy knew. What he did with it, nobody, not even his master, guessed.

Sen had one god, and his name was Abel Bellamy, though the old man did not speak a dozen sentences to him in the course of the year. Perhaps of his affliction was born a new sense, a keener perception of Bellamy's mind. He was the one man in the world that Abe did not bully or get into a passion with. Sen had his orders by the private telephone wire, and tapped the transmitter once to signal that he understood, or twice if he wished the message repeated. He was good-looking for a Chinaman, with dark, sombre eyes and good features. In his chauffeur's uniform his very nationality was disguised. In a pocket of the car near to his hand he kept a number of cards. On one was printed "I am dumb, but I understand you," and on the other were requirements such as petrol, tyres, etc., which it might be necessary to secure on a journey.

His aloofness from the castle household was complete.

Digitized by Google

He avoided even Julius, and the only attempt that the secretary had ever made to make friends had been met by a cold stare and the hasty retreat of Sen.

Featherstone had realised something of the relationship of the man to Abe, and had made no attempt to improve what was not even an acquaintance. Once, when Sen was driving his master to a neighbouring town, Jim had searched his quarters, but had found nothing more remarkable than a very extensive Chinese library and a spotlessly clean suite of rooms.

Once Abe had considered installing the Chinaman in the castle to watch for the Green Archer, but had decided against the plan. The inability of Sen to raise an outcry was fatal to its success.

Julius, at the telephone, called the chauffeur, and the answering tap came immediately.

"Mr. Bellamy wants you to come right away. He doesn't want the car, he wants you."

Sen arrived soon after. In his moments of leisure he wore his big-sleeved blouse, and with his hands concealed in their folds he went into the presence of his master.

"Take the second car to Newbury Junction, wait in the dark road leading from the station, and change the number plate. You will pick up a man, and mention my name, and go where he tells you. You will return to Garre tonight."

Sen bowed his head, waited for further instructions, and, none being forthcoming, he went out.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLIV

Fay Goes Against Her Principles

Jim Featherstone was dressing for dinner, and his valet remarked casually that he did not seem to enjoy the prospect of a function to which he had been looking forward—a reunion with old war comrades, for he was attending the annual dinner of his old regiment.

"Angus, you have spoken the truth," said Jim. "I never felt less inclined to listen to patriotic speeches and emotional references to dangers shared and hardships borne."

"Maybe when you've had a drink or two——" began the valet hopefully.

"If you mean to suggest that I can't be happy unless I get drunk," said the annoyed Jim, "I can only tell you, Angus, that you lie in your boots. I don't want to go to this dinner because I'd rather be somewhere else."

"There's a first night at the Gaiety, sir," said Angus.

"I'm not even thinking of first nights at the Gaiety. I am superior to first nights anywhere," said Jim.

"I am sure, sir," said the polite Angus, "you'd be much happier at your club, playing a rubber of bridge."

"I should be very unhappy at my club playing a rubber of bridge," said Jim patiently. "Don't probe into my grisly secrets, I beg of you, Angus."

"No, sir," said Angus. "I wouldn't think of doing such a thing. You've made a hawful mess of that tie, sir."

Whilst he readjusted the dress tie with nimble fingers Jim wondered what the sedate Angus would say if he confessed that he would much rather be sitting in a drawing-room at Garre looking into the most lovely eyes in the world. Angus would probably despise him, for he was a loveless man who, when he was at home, lived with his mother, and raised rabbits for profit.

The dinner was a very cheery gathering, and for a mo-

Digitized by Google

ment Jim regretted the carelessness that would have kept him from meeting so many good fellows with whom he had lived, and very nearly died, in those hideous years in Flanders.

The festivities ceased, so far as Jim was concerned, at eleven o'clock, at which hour he left for Scotland Yard to receive reports, for he was acting in the place of a superior on his holidays.

He was in his office, running rapidly through the brief notes of arrests that had been reported, when the clerk on night duty came in.

"There's a lady to see you, sir," he said.

"Has she been waiting?"

"No, sir, she's just come."

"Who is she?" said Jim, his mind flying instantly to Valerie.

"I don't know her, sir. She says it is very important. She's a Miss Clayton."

"Fay!" said Jim in surprise. "Show her in, please." And then: "Why, Fay, this is an unexpected joy."

She stood in the doorway surveying him and, against her will, admiring him, for Jim was a fine figure of a man in his evening kit, his dress glittering with decorations.

"Nobody would think you were a policeman, Featherstone. You look almost like a gentleman. What is the *passementerie* effect on your coat?"

"They're medals won at the Cattle Show. Won't you sit down? Percy will respond more rapidly if you're comfortable."

"Percy?" she said, off her guard.

"Persiflage. Forgive the inanity of the jest, but I have just left a number of light-hearted subalterns, and my sense of humour is corrupted. Well, Fay, what brings you here?"

"I wish you'd forget that Fay stuff," she said primly. "I suppose you know I'm married? Not that I really mind. I'm easy-going; that is my trouble. Featherstone," she said, her tone changing suddenly, "you be careful of that girl."

"Which girl?" he asked, recognising the seriousness of the warning. "You mean Miss Howett?"

Digitized by Google

She nodded.

"There's something happening, and I can't quite see what it is. I had a visit from Coldharbour Smith this morning. You may know him. Of course you do."

"What about Coldharbour Smith?" he demanded impatiently. "What is the job? I'm sorry if I'm rough with you," he said, seeing her injured look, "but I'm more than a little anxious."

"He had a great scheme for playing a joke on Miss Howett," Fay went on. "Personally it didn't raise a laugh in me, and I'm pretty easy to amuse—I've laughed at jokes in *Punch*. The idea was to tell Miss Howett that a woman she's been looking for—her mother—was staying in Coldharbour's club, the Golden East, and, having thoroughly interested her, I was to take her to Limehouse, and that's where my job ended, except for collecting five hundred. What do you think, Captain Featherstone?"

There was an expression in Captain Featherstone's face that made the question superfluous.

"When was this to happen?" he asked.

"I don't know. No particular night was fixed, but I have an idea that it was this week."

He had risen and walked across to the fireplace, and was looking down at the blazing coal. She could not see his face, and she guessed that he had taken the position he had that she should not. After a while he turned.

"I can't tell you how grateful I am to you, Mrs. Savini," he said. "In turning down this suggestion you have acted as I should have expected any decent woman to act, and I can't tell you that I'm surprised."

A dull colour came slowly into the girl's face; it was the first compliment that she had been paid for many years.

"I know this is a squeal," she said, "and I never dreamt I should do it."

"But you have done it, and it shan't stand against you." He looked at his watch; it was half-past eleven. "I wonder if I can get Spike Holland."

"I tried today——" she began, and he uttered an exclamation.

Digitized by Google

"It was you, then, Fay? Miss Howett told me that somebody was trying to get in touch with her. What a good soul you are!"

He walked across to her and offered his hand, and, frowning uncomfortably, she took it.

"If you ask me to your wedding, Featherstone, and you miss any of the wedding presents, on the level it won't be me who took 'em," she said.

"Can you wait while I telephone?"

She nodded. He got through almost immediately to the Blue Boar, and to his amazement Spike came at once to the 'phone.

"I thought you were on guard, Holland."

"No necessity, Captain. Miss Howett left about seven."

"Left with whom?" demanded Jim quickly.

"With one of your men—the man you sent down from Scotland Yard. Hasn't she reached you yet?"

"No," said Jim huskily as he put down the instrument.

"What is the matter?" asked the girl in a low voice.

"Miss Howett is not at Garre. She went away this evening with a man who pretended to be a detective from Scotland Yard," he said slowly.

Only for a few seconds was he stricken to helplessness by the shock of the news. At the press of his bell a uniformed clerk came in, and he gave his orders quickly.

"Get K Division; order out all reserves; form a cordon about the Golden East. It is marked 37 on the raid plan of the division. . . . Got that?"

"Yes, sir," said the clerk, scribbling.

"All reserves of A Division on duty or in the station to join me immediately. Two police cars—hurry!"

From a drawer in his writing-table he took out a long-barrelled Browning, drew back the jacket, and pressed a cartridge home. He slipped it into the pocket of his evening dress and took up his coat from the table.

"I was going to suggest that you should come with me, but I think you'd better not," he said. "Nobody saw you arrive at Scotland Yard?"

"Featherstone"—Fay's voice shook—"this man Coldhar-

Digitized by Google

bour Smith knows something about me. It wouldn't interest you very much, but it means a whole lot if Julius knows. If he puts up a fight, get him good!"

The shade of a smile passed over his set face.

"Bloodthirsty woman," he said with a touch of his old flippancy, and was gone.

By the time he reached the courtyard of that palace of gloom, half a dozen special service men were assembled, and to them briefly he told the object of the raid.

"You understand, this is to be ostensibly a raid to catch the faro players. I've had a warrant on ice for three months, and I'm executing it tonight. I expect to find a lady concealed on the premises, and if I do I should treat it as a favour if one of you men will stop me shooting Coldharbour Smith."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLV

The Raid

A car came up at that moment, and they all bundled in, and were racing along the broad boulevard of the Thames Embankment before the second car had arrived. Through the deserted city, into the glare of Whitechapel. The theatres were disgorging their crowds, and progress was slower; yet within a quarter of an hour the car swung into the street on which the Golden East stood, and Jim sprang out before the driver had stopped. The cordon was already formed, and the street seemed to be filled with unobtrusive men, who closed in on the building as the car pulled up. Jim passed the doorkeeper and ran up the stairs. The coon band was playing, and a dozen couples were dancing on the polished floor; but, oblivious to their comfort, he pushed past them into the bar to where the white-coated satellite of Coldharbour Smith was leaning nonchalantly upon the counter, seemingly absorbed in the dancing couples.

"Where's Smith?" asked Jim.

"He's not been here tonight, Captain."

Jim nodded, and turning to the ball-room, made a signal to the leader of the band, and the music stopped.

"Everybody in this room will get their coats and wraps and will pass one by one before me," he ordered, and the guests obeyed with some alacrity, though there were one or two sulky-looking individuals who seemed to resent this disturbance of the harmony.

In the meantime the special service men had flowed into the building, and two of them followed Jim behind the bar.

"The door's locked. Coldharbour's got the key," said the sulky barman.

Jim Featherstone put up his foot and drove with all his strength; the door opened with a crash. The lights were burning in the empty room, and on the table stood a pint

Digitized by Google

bottle of champagne which was half empty. There was one glass. He took up the glass and smelt it.

"Through that door." He pointed to the door leading to the street. "There's an exit below."

He himself continued up the stairs. At the top there was a small landing and a locked door, under which a line of light showed. He tapped, and instantly the light went out. Waiting no longer, he put his shoulder to the panel and drove in the door.

"Put on the lights," he ordered sharply. "Any man who attempts to rush me, I'll shoot."

A detective behind him threw a ray of light from an electric torch and revealed a dozen uncomfortable-looking men, a hint of a green table, and a scatter of cards, and then the light went on.

"You're all under arrest here," said Jim. "What are you playing—faro?"

"We're only playing bridge," said a voice.

"Tell that to the man on the bench tomorrow morning," said Jim tersely.

A door led out of the room, and he passed through, to find himself in the kitchen of the establishment. There was nothing here. He came down again to the private room behind the bar, and found a disconsolate barman.

"This is pretty tough on me, Captain. I've only bought the business from Coldharbour a week ago. I've put every penny I've saved into it."

"Then you've lost it," said Jim savagely.

He could see that the man was speaking the truth, and he remembered that Coldharbour had talked about handing over his business to somebody else.

"I'll close this club in a week after I've had a conviction against the men upstairs. What do you think of that, Barnett?"

Barnett evidently did not think much of it.

"It's tough on me——" he began.

"Was Coldharbour here tonight? Who was he with?"

The man refused to speak.

"I'll give you a chance. I'll make this case against you

Digitized by Google

as light as possible, and I'll not move to suspend the license of the club, if you tell me when Coldharbour Smith was here."

"He was here half an hour ago," said Barnett.

"Who was with him?"

"A lady."

"Who else?"

"The man that brought her up. He went away."

"And where are they now?"

"I don't know, Captain. I swear I don't know. All I know is that Coldharbour collected every cent of money that was due to him and slipped out. He said he was going to America or some place."

"How has he gone? No liner has left these shores for America or South America since Monday. How has he gone, Barnett?"

"I don't know, sir." The man hesitated. "He's always meeting these sea captains. They come here regularly. He's had a lot to do with one of them—been here for hours with him."

"Who was the captain?"

"A man called Fernandez. He's the part owner of a small tramp, and runs it himself—the *Contessa;* she's lying out in the Pool, or was this afternoon, because the skipper was in here."

Jim reached for the telephone and gave a number.

"Superintendent of Thames Division? . . . It is Captain Featherstone speaking. I want the *Contessa* held. She's a tramp lying in the Pool. . . . Oh, you know her, do you?"

He waited a moment whilst the divisional exchange put him through to the riverside station.

"Yes. . . . Captain Featherstone speaking. I want the *Contessa* held, inspector. . . . She's in the Pool? Good!"

His car carried him to a sub-station of the Water Police on the riverside, and he jumped into the little motor-boat that was awaiting him.

"The *Contessa* shows no sign of moving," said the inspector in charge of the boat. "She's still at anchor."

"Has any boat left the Pool?"

Digitized by Google

"There was one went out early this morning—the *Messina*. She was a South American cargo-boat, too."

The tramp, with her riding lights on the mast, lay in the very centre of the Pool, that broad stretch of the Thames where the shipping of all the world foregathers sooner or later. The launch came alongside, and, catching the monkey ladder, the river policemen went aboard hand over fist, and Jim followed.

Apparently no watch was kept, for the deck was empty, and without ceremony the river policemen led the way below. The captain of the *Contessa* was awakened from a drunken sleep and hauled up to the saloon, which was on the deck level. He had seen nobody and had heard nothing, he said, when he was partially sober. He thought his crew were all drunk; at any rate, he was certain his officers were, and he was not mistaken.

"This can't be the ship," said the troubled Jim as they regained the deck. "These men are genuinely lit up, and there isn't a man on board who's capable of taking the ship down the river."

The search was thorough but short, for they made the startling discovery that the ship had no steam. Her fires were drawn and cold, and it was a physical impossibility for her to get under weigh, even though she had had any such design.

"It must have been the other ship that went down this afternoon," said Jim.

The river policeman shook his head.

"She'll be at sea now," he said, "unless she was waiting for this fellow to join her. He could very easily get to her by motor-car if she lay up for him off Tilbury."

They went down the monkey ladder again and joined the motor-boat, and Valerie Howett heard the *chug-chug* of the little motor as it made for the shore, and in her heart was blank despair.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLVI

How Valerie Went to the Golden East

It was late in the evening when the man came—a respectable, unsuspicionable man—and Valerie came down to the drawing-room to find him sitting deferentially on the edge of a chair, studying the carpet. He rose as she entered.

"I'm Sergeant Brown, madam. Captain Featherstone has sent me down to escort you to Scotland Yard. We think we have found Mrs. Held."

The girl's mouth opened in astonishment.

"Really? Oh no, it can't be true! Are you sure?"

"We are absolutely certain, miss. We have found her at the Golden East, which is a low club kept by a man called Coldharbour Smith. Apparently she's been there for two years under lock and key."

"Wait, wait!" she cried, and ran back to her room and dressed herself with unsteady fingers.

She came down to order the car, but found the man in the hallway, waiting for her.

"My car is here, madam," he said. "The Commissioner thought it would be more convenient."

"It was very good of him," she said warmly.

She only stopped to snatch her fur, and to leave a hurried message for Mr. Howett, to be delivered to him on his return, and then she preceded the man into the big car that was waiting at the gate. The chauffeur, with his collar upturned, she did not recognise.

As they passed through the village, the car was pulled up to allow a waggon, laden with a big tree trunk, to turn, and at that moment Julius Savini, standing by the lodge gates, saw, in the light of the lamps above the gate, the girl and her companion. Neither noticed the slight figure of the Eurasian, for it was dark and he was in the shadow. There was only a second for Julius to take his decision, and he took it literally at a run. The obstructing waggon had passed, and the car was gathering speed as he leapt at the

Digitized by Google

baggage rack behind, and with a jerk pulled it down. He had to sprint at full speed, and making one supreme effort he reached the precarious perch and sat back, gasping for breath and cursing himself violently, if silently, for the mad act he had committed. A policeman at the end of the village street saw the car, and stared with amazement at the extraordinary spectacle of Julius Savini seated on the baggage rack.

The rack was hard, painfully hard, and the speed of the car was immense. There were moments when Julius hung on for dear life, expecting every moment to be his last; but his tenacity won out, and, dusty and dishevelled, he passed through the brightly lit streets of the London suburbs, an object of scorn and derision, but now thoroughly aroused and determined upon his course.

Valerie did not speak throughout the journey. She was so completely absorbed in her own thoughts, and in the wonderful possibilities which this news opened for her, that she would not break the spell of happy meditation, until they had crossed the river and were heading, as she knew, for the East End of London.

"Aren't you going to Scotland Yard?" she asked.

"No, miss. The Captain is waiting for you at the Golden East."

She recognised the club, but the door at which the car stopped was not that by which she had entered the club on a previous occasion. The man jumped out and instantly the door was opened.

"The Captain is upstairs, miss," he said.

She never doubted for one second that he spoke the truth; and even when she stepped into the little room behind the bar and came face to face with Coldharbour Smith she had no realisation of her peril. She had never seen Smith before, although she had made one journey to interrogate him; yet she knew him at once.

"You're Mr. Smith, aren't you?" she said with a smile.

"That's me, miss. The Captain will be in right along. He told me to give you a little refreshment."

A bottle of champagne was standing on the table, and

Digitized by Google

with deft hands he unwrapped the wire and pulled the cork.

"He said maybe you'd be tired after your long journey."

"I'm not at all tired, and I don't drink champagne," she said.

A cold voice within her was whispering "Danger," and now for the first time she realised how madly imprudent she had been.

"Will you tell Captain Featherstone?"

"He isn't here for the moment, miss," said Coldharbour, his glittering eyes feasting greedily upon her beauty. "He found your mother—yes, miss, it is your mother."

"My mother!" gasped the girl. "Are you sure?" eagerly, forgetting for the moment all thought of peril.

"Yes, miss, it's your mother. They rescued her just as old man Bellamy was planning to send her off to South America. In fact, the Captain found her on a ship—very ill." He shook his head mournfully. "One of the sickest women I've ever seen, Miss Howett. Has a nurse there day and night. You're to take the young lady on the *Contessa*, officer." He addressed the man who had accompanied Valerie.

"On a ship? But I can't go. . . . How far is it?" said the bewildered girl.

"Not a mile from here. You need have no fear whilst the sergeant's with you. Besides, the river is full of Thames police."

She might have thought it strange that the car was still waiting at the door, but in her eagerness to meet the woman for whom she had searched so long the story seemed plausible, and so like what Abe Bellamy would do.

The car ran into a long and narrow side street, turned to the left, passed under the high walls of warehouses, and presently stopped at a narrow opening in the wall, through which she caught the sheen of the fast-flowing river. Near by were some slum children playing at soldiers—she wondered absently where the leader had procured his flashing sword.

"I expect that's the boat waiting for you, miss," said the pseudo-detective.

Digitized by Google

She halted irresolutely. It seemed so dark, so menacing, that narrow opening, and the dim outline of the boat held a threat all of its own.

"Wouldn't you ask the Captain to come ashore for me?" she said, her courage giving out.

"I think you'd better go, miss. There's really no danger. He's an expert waterman. I shouldn't be surprised if it isn't a crew of the Thames police he's sent for you."

But it wasn't a crew of the Thames police she discovered when she had taken her seat in the stern of the bobbing boat. They were foreigners and they were the worse for drink.

"I want to go back," she said, half-rising. "Please put me back."

"Sit down," said the man. "You'll overturn the boat if you're not careful, and drown all of us. I don't think that Captain Featherstone will like the way you're going on, miss."

She could only sit still, trembling, helpless. She saw a boat pulling steadily against the tide, the oars working rhythmically, almost machine-like in their regular movement. A scream, and she was saved, for it was a patrol of the River Police that was passing. But she did not know who they were, nor did she recognise the awful predicament in which she was to find herself.

She had to climb on board up a vertical ladder to reach the deserted deck.

"Everybody is down below," said the man who joined her. She was a little breathless from her exertion of climbing. "I'll show you the way, miss."

She followed him across the greasy deck, and he opened a door. Before she realised what had happened, she had walked in and the door was closed upon her.

The saloon was small and smelt evilly of garlic. The port-lights were closed, so that not one ray from the swinging oil lamp escaped. She tried the door, but knew that her attempt was in vain. If she had only remembered to bring Spike's revolver! But she hadn't. There was no

Digitized by Google

weapon of any kind, though she searched the saloon feverishly.

A step sounded on the stairs outside. The door was unlocked, and a man came in, closed it, and leant his back against it, and looked at her with amusement in his eyes.

"Mr. Smith," she faltered, "where is Captain Featherstone, and what does this mean?"

"What does it mean? Well, I'll tell you what it means, young woman," said Coldharbour Smith. "It means that you and I are going to be married, and we're leaving for Rio on a honeymoon trip."

Valerie stared at him.

"I don't understand you," she said. "Will you please get away from that door? I want to go on deck. I must leave this ship. . . ."

In her frenzy she tried to pull him away, but he held her at arm's length and laughed in her face.

"You're coming with me for a long voyage, my dear, and whether you get married at this end of it or the other end doesn't matter. If you give me any trouble"—his bright demeanour suddenly changed—"I tell you what I'll do to you."

His big hands flashed to her throat. She tried to fight clear, but the cruel fingers pressed until she could not breathe and the blood rushed to her head. . . . Suddenly he released his grip and she fell to her knees, gasping for breath.

"Treat me fair, and I'll treat you fair," he warned her. "There's nothing you could ask me that I wouldn't do for you. But treat me rough, and——" His teeth showed ominously.

She staggered to the nearest chair and sat down, dropping her head on her arms, and tried to bring her wild and scattered thoughts into line.

"There's no good making a fuss, especially now," said Coldharbour Smith. "The skipper's drunk, and if he wasn't drunk he'd be worse than me. Now you behave yourself, my girl——"

There came a knock at the door, and an agitated voice

Digitized by Google

called him. He went outside, was absent two minutes, then returned.

"Come here," he called, and when she did not obey: "Come here!" he shouted.

He drove her up the stairs by the arm, along the untidy deck, and the man who had played the part of police officer lifted a small iron trap in the foc'sle and slipped through feet first.

"Get down!" hissed Coldharbour Smith, and lifted her so that her feet dangled over space. She felt for the rung of the iron ladder mechanically and went down step by step. The acrid smell of rusting iron came to her. She was in a tiny hold; her feet rested on a tangle of chains, and there was scarcely room to stand upright.

Smith followed her down and pulled the iron door close after him. The space was confined, and they were wedged tightly together. Coldharbour Smith behind her, his paws on her shoulder.

"I didn't think they'd come so soon," he said in a husky whisper; "but with the skipper drunk and the fires drawn, they'll never think they've been fooled."

"Who told?" asked the other man in the same tone.

"Barnett . . . perhaps they had a man planted at the club. Featherstone is a wide-awake chap—damn him!"

The hold in shape was like the sharp end of an egg, and at its narrowest part were two oval apertures, through one of which ran a hawser. From where she stood, Valerie could see the river out of the corner of her eyes, and the sound of the motor-boat came plainly to her ears.

She heard the bump of it as it came alongside, and then a voice. It was the voice of Jim Featherstone. She opened her lips to scream, but Coldharbour's hand came swiftly across her mouth.

"Shout and I'll strangle you!"

He was afraid. She could feel him trembling. The clang of feet on the iron deck, and then silence.

"They've gone below," whispered the second of the men, and Smith nodded.

It seemed an eternity before the searchers returned. She

Digitized by Google

heard their feet over her head, and a voice she did not recognise said:

"That is the chain locker; they wouldn't be there. I'll search it if you like."

"I don't think they are on board at all. Barnett has been paid to lead us wrong."

Coldharbour grinned in the darkness.

Another consultation, and the sound of feet against the ship's side, and then the noise of the motor-boat growing fainter and fainter.

"They're gone!" said Smith, and felt the girl grow limp in his grasp.

They lifted her up to the deck and hurried her below, and the occupant of a little boat that lay under the stern drew himself slowly and stealthily to the side of the vessel.

He was grimed with the dust of country roads, his hair, usually so well brushed and glossy, was dishevelled, and his delicate hands sore and bleeding from his unaccustomed exertions. Julius Savini made fast the boat, stepped on to the lowest rung of the monkey ladder, and climbed cautiously, carrying in his hand the curious weapon he had taken from the bottom of the boat.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLVII

Fay Has a Message

"There's something to pay on this, miss," said the postman. Fay had come to the door in her dressing-gown, having been awakened from her sleep by the thunderous knocking at the door.

"I won't take any letter that isn't stamped," she said, annoyed.

"It isn't a letter and it isn't a post card," said the postman, examining the ragged slip in his hand.

"Who is it from?" asked Fay, and the carrier of mails grinned.

"It's against regulations to tell you, but it's from somebody called 'Julius,'" he said, and she almost snatched it from his hand.

She had to go to her room to find the money, and it took her five minutes to decipher the message, which was written on a sheet of paper torn from a notebook, on one side of which her address had been written in pencil. The writing was wild and shaky, but after a while she made out the meaning of it.

"Lacy has taken Miss H. Saw them in village and jumped the car. Went to G. East. Smith, L., and Miss H. come out and gone in boat to ship. Am following. Tell Featherstone."

Fay had no sooner mastered the note than she reached for the 'phone. She tried three numbers without finding Jim Featherstone, but left a message at each. She had finished dressing when the bell rang furiously, and Jim's tired voice answered her.

Digitized by Google

"Want me, Fay?"

She read the letter over the telephone without preliminary.

"Good for Julius. What is the postmark?"

She consulted the paper.

"E. 5," she said. "Haven't you seen him—Julius?"

"No. Nor heard. He didn't say where he was or what was the ship?"

"No. He wouldn't know, would he?"

"True. I'll come up."

In ten minutes he was with her, a tired-looking young man, unshaven and dusty.

"We held up a ship at the mouth of the river, but they weren't aboard. They wouldn't have been if the ship Julius saw was in the river last night, for it was low tide and they wouldn't have pulled out until four o'clock this morning."

She had bustled round the kitchen and there was hot coffee for him, for which he was grateful.

"There goes your 'phone," said Jim suddenly, jumping up. "Perhaps it is Julius. May I answer?"

"I'll risk getting a bad name," she said; "but you might explain that I'm not in the habit of having policemen to breakfast with me."

The moment Jim Featherstone heard the voice he recognised it as Abe Bellamy's.

"Is Savini there?" he asked.

Jim beckoned the girl and handed the receiver to her.

"Where's your husband?" asked the old man.

"He's not here, Mr. Bellamy. Isn't he at Garre?"

"Should I be asking for him if he was at Garre? He went out last night and didn't return. You can tell him to send for his clothes and his money. He's fired!"

"Perhaps he's with Lacy," said the girl sweetly. "Lacy went down to take Miss Howett to Coldharbour Smith—even the police know that."

There was so long a silence at the other end of the wire that she thought he had gone away. Then:

"I know nothing about Lacy," he said in a milder voice, "and nothing about the Howett girl—what is this stuff you

Digitized by Google

are giving me?" Another pause, and: "What are the police doing?"

She put her hand over the receiver and repeated his question.

"Tell him we are holding up all ships in the river," whispered Jim.

"You've got somebody there," said the suspicious old man. "Who is it?"

Jim nodded.

"Captain Featherstone," said the girl, and heard Bellamy swear and the "clok" of his receiver.

"Now the question is, where is Julius?" said Jim Featherstone. "I confess that I'm just a little relieved to know that he's around. I never dreamt that I should ever be relying on *him!*"

"You don't know Julius," said the proud wife.

Jim, unfortunately, knew Julius only too well, but he did not say as much.

He returned to his office, where he had left Mr. Howett, who had received the news of his foster child's danger with extraordinary courage.

"I can't believe that harm will come to her," he said. "You understand, Captain Featherstone, that you are to spare no expense to recover my girl."

"If money would buy her safety she would be free," said Jim as patiently as he could. "Forgive me if I'm a little irritable, but I'm nervy this morning. You were not at Lady's Manor when Miss Howett left?"

"No. . . . I was in London." Mr. Howett spoke with difficulty. "But if I had been at Garre I should not have stopped her going with a man I believed to be from Scotland Yard. Have you any kind of clue to work on?"

"I believe I have," said Jim after thinking for a time. He rang for his secretary. "Go to records, and look up Lacy—Henry Francis Lacy, if I remember rightly. He was convicted three years ago at the Old Bailey on a charge of burglary. Circulate his description to all stations. He is to be held wherever he is found under the Prevention of Crimes Act, and I am to be notified immediately he is

Digitized by Google

pulled in. Lacy is a land man," he said, "and unless he has a suspicion that he is wanted we shall probably find him somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Golden East. This is more likely because Barnett, the barman, did not tell me the name of the man who was with Smith, and one of the first things Lacy will go out to discover is how far he is implicated in this business."

"What do you make of Julius Savini's disappearance?"

Jim shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"Julius is weird. There are streaks of decency in Julius Savini which nobody would suspect. I am satisfied that the note he sent to his wife was a perfectly genuine one, and that the man is somewhere close to Valerie. I never dreamt that I should envy Julius Savini," he added, half to himself.

A cold bath and a change of clothing brought Jim Featherstone, refreshed, to the chase. The Thames Police had organised a comprehensive search of every vessel lying in the Pool, from London Bridge to Greenwich, and Jim joined the little steam pinnace that carried the chief inspector from ship to ship. In every case they drew blank.

Passing the little ship that Jim had visited the night before, he saw a lazy curl of yellow smoke coming out of her discoloured funnel, but the only person visible was one of the untidy-looking seamen, who, with folded arms, was looking idly over the side.

"I suppose there's no advantage in searching her again," said Jim doubtfully.

"I don't think so, sir," replied the inspector. "They would hardly take this lady to a ship that wasn't even ready to get out of the river. I should think Barnett was lying when he said that Coldharbour had taken the young lady to the *Contessa*."

Jim nodded, but he looked back wistfully at the squat and ugly tramp, and wished that Barnett had been speaking the truth. When he subsequently interviewed the barman, he found him almost in tears.

"If I die this minute, Captain, I didn't put you wrong. If I did, it was because Coldharbour must have known I was listening at the keyhole, and faked the talk."

Digitized by Google

"Did you hear anything else except that they were going to the *Contessa?*"

"Yes, sir, I heard Coldharbour say that he was going to marry the young lady when they got aboard. He was telling this Spanish captain what a good looker she was, and how he got one of the girls round here to go up West and buy a whole trunkful of clothes for her, because she wouldn't have any when she got aboard. I've put all my life savings into this club," said the distracted man, "and I've borrowed money on mortgage. You can imagine what I feel like, Captain! Why, I'd give Coldharbour away a dozen times over to save my money, and that's telling you straight."

Jim believed the man. If he had led the search party astray, it was through no fault of his own. Coldharbour had probably arranged the conversation; the fact that it must have been in English went to prove that it was not genuine.

More to the point—and this made for the salvation of Barnett's little fortune—it was not in the interests of the police to close the Golden East, as Jim had threatened. These crime "sanctuaries" were becoming scarce, and it took a long time to work up the reputation of a new place. Moro's served its purpose, and, like a moth to the flame, drew all that was crooked in the West End. The Golden East did its duty at the other end of the town.

He was interrogating Barnett when Spike Holland arrived with news. Spike had come to Barnett by road, and had stopped to make enquiries about the car which had carried the girl and the spurious police officer.

"There was a man on the baggage carrier. He was seen at two or three places, particularly in one of the suburbs of London. A policeman saw him and wanted to pull him off, and from the description there's no doubt at all that it was Julius."

"Savini!" said Jim thoughtfully. "That accounts for his message. Now, where is Savini? If we can find him, it would be a simple matter to find Miss Howett."

"Old man Bellamy has come to town: he arrived this

Digitized by Google

morning," said Spike. "It is difficult to get any news now that Julius is gone, and the lodge-keeper is a poor substitute. But he told me that the old man has cleared out and he isn't returning for days. Which is curious," said Spike, "because Bellamy hasn't spent a night away from the castle for eight years—that's the one bit of information I got from the lodge-keeper that Julius couldn't supply. Captain, I've got a great hunch about the archer."

Jim Featherstone was in no mood to discuss the Green Archer for the moment, but he listened as patiently as he could.

"A man who can use the bow and arrow skilfully and as accurately as this green bird must have had a whole lot of practice," said Spike. "Doesn't that strike you?"

"I haven't given it a great deal of thought," said Jim, a little impatiently. He was anxious to continue his search, and for once Spike was boring him.

"Archery isn't the game it used to be," Spike went on, "in the days of good King Hokum, when the merry lads and lasses tripped it on the green, and all the girls wanted to be seen with the man who got a gold—a gold is the medieval bull's eye, in case you don't know it."

"I did know it," said Jim wearily. "Well, what are you driving at?"

"It struck me," said Spike earnestly, "that if we made a search amongst the archery societies, we might, by a process of elimination, unearth the green fellow. I'm going to see the secretary of the Toxophilite Society. What 'Toxophilite' means I don't know: it sounds like a new serum for measles: but maybe he'll tell me something."

"Go ahead," said Jim, who was genuinely glad to see the back of the reporter.

The Toxophilite Society had its headquarters at Regent's Park, and by great good luck Spike arrived on the ground almost simultaneously with an assistant secretary.

"Yes, I can show you the list of members for the last thirty years," said that official, and Spike spent a studious afternoon in a close examination of the club's records.

It was when he was going through a record of old

Digitized by Google

competitions that his finger stopped at a name and his mouth opened wide. He went in search of the secretary, and that gentleman returned with him to the little office.

"I don't know the name," he said. "Is it amongst the list of members?"

Again they inspected the members' book, but the name did not occur.

"It was an open competition, which means that outsiders may have competed," said the secretary. "It is rather curious that the name is not amongst the members, because the shooting must have been magnificent. You see there were ten golds in succession. Do you know this person?"

"I think so," said Spike breathlessly. "Oh yes, I think so."

He had found the Green Archer at last!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLVIII

Julius Takes Action

Ships and their ways were mysteries to Julius Savini. He had travelled by sea, but he had never been on board a ship that was quite like the *Contessa*. Reaching the well of the foredeck, he glanced round: a steel ladder which led to the upper deck where the boats were swung, offered the most likely place of concealment, and he climbed quickly, his weapon of offence under his arm. It was a short-bladed sword, and he had stolen it from a small boy who had been its proud possessor a quarter of an hour before. Ancient though it was, its point was sharp; and though its edge lacked cutting qualities, it could in an emergency be employed with disastrous effects. He would like to have paid the boy, but he had no money, so he had stolen it, and, pursued by the howling battalion whose armament he had ravaged, he had fled to the little wharf from whence the girl had boarded the *Contessa*, and, finding a handy boat, had pulled away, passing the boat that was going back to the wharf to pick up Coldharbour Smith.

Julius was not a swordsman, and was ignorant in the science of the arm; but its possession brought him the courage which was so necessary at this moment of crisis. Exactly what he was going to do, he did not know. Valerie Howett had come on board the ship with Lacy, and Lacy he knew and had immediately recognised, as the machine had passed through the village of Garre, as a crook associated with Coldharbour Smith. Possibly the motive which had made him take that wild leap to the luggage carrier was wholly mercenary. He wondered himself, in the darkness of the boat-deck, whether that was not the case, though he would like to feel that it was the urge of humanity which had sent him on that terrible journey.

The night was young, and he wondered what he was going

Digitized by Google

to do. Coldharbour Smith was on board, and somebody else had come—a motor-boat with four men. He had seen them dimly as they made to the side of the vessel, but he was entirely ignorant of their identities, or another story might have been told.

Presently he heard the boat depart, and made his cautious way along the littered boat-deck, past the funnel. His objective was a patch of light, which proved to be a skylight of frosted glass. He lifted one edge gently, and it came up an inch or two, giving him a view of a corner of a dirty-looking saloon. In his excitement Julius nearly betrayed his presence, for the very first person he saw was Valerie Howett! She was sitting in a chair at the end of a bare table; and one glance at her set, white face told Julius all that he wanted to know.

He had had an uncomfortable feeling in his mind that the girl might have been voluntarily accompanying Lacy, knowing his character, and that all his trouble and misery had been for nothing. Now he knew. Coldharbour Smith sat on her right, his sparkling hands resting on the table, his evil face turned to her. They were talking, but the river noises were such that Julius could not hear a word that he was saying. He found a brass hook that was evidently employed to keep the skylight open, and with great care he slipped it into the socket, then, lying down, he put his ear to the opening.

Coldharbour would not have seen him under any circumstances, for the saloon was lit by an oil lamp, so shaded that most of the light was thrown down upon the table.

"We shall sail tomorrow night," Smith was saying, "and you can get it out of your head that your friend Featherstone will come along at the last moment and take you off. Do you know what it means to me if you're found?" he asked.

She did not turn her head, but sat staring into vacancy.

"It means a life imprisonment—I'd sooner hang. And I'll hang for you, my lady, if you give me any trouble."

"If it's money you want," she said, breaking her silence, "I can give you more——"

Digitized by Google

"Forget it," said Smith contemptuously. "I've got all the money I want. You don't think you're going to persuade me to let you go, do you? You'd be squealing in half an hour, and it would be me for the quarries! You don't know Dartmoor Prison, or you wouldn't think I'd take the risk of going there. American prisons are palaces, where men are treated like men, but Dartmoor is hell—no, I'm going on, or I'll hang. I always wanted to settle down," he went on, "but I've never had the right kind of girl to settle down with. We can be married on board ship: any sea captain can marry you if you're outside the three-mile limit. If you don't want to be married, why, that's your look out."

"This is Abel Bellamy's work," she said, in so low a tone that Julius could hardly hear her.

"We'll name no names," said the discreet Coldharbour. "All I know is that you're going along with me, and I think, by the time we reach our destination, you'll be a sensible girl."

He rose and stood looking down at her.

"Valerie, your name is, isn't it? That's what I'm going to call you. You can call me Coldharbour, or call me Harry—Harry's my name," he added unnecessarily.

He waited for some response, but she did not even look at him, and, putting on his hat, the removal of which, when he came into the saloon, had been a great concession to the decencies on the part of Coldharbour Smith, he stalked to the door.

"There's a sleeping cabin behind that curtain," he said, "and a wash place. You'll be comfortable on this ship. It is as good as yours."

He slammed the door after him and locked it. Julius waited until he was gone, then lifted the skylight to its fullest extent and, slipping through, dropped on the table before the startled eyes of the girl.

"Don't speak," he whispered.

"Mr.—Mr. Savini——" she stammered.

"Don't speak," hissed Julius.

He pulled off his shoes and went to the door. There was no sound, but at any moment Coldharbour Smith might

Digitized by Google

return. Walking to the table, he turned down the wick of the lamp and, pulling the extinguisher, plunged the cabin in darkness. Then he felt his way along the chairs to where the girl was sitting.

"I was on the car behind," he explained rapidly.

"Can you get me out?" she whispered.

"I think so. I'm not sure yet." He looked up at the skylight. "You might be able to get out that way," he said, "but I think it will be easier to break open the door, or wait for Smith to open it. He's certain to come back before he's gone to bed."

They waited an hour, but Smith did not come, and Julius began to work with the point of his sword at the lock. He gave up the attempt in a little while.

"I can't do it," he said, wiping his streaming forehead. "You'll have to go by way of the skylight, Miss Howett, or not at all."

Even as he spoke, there was a heavy, lurching step over their heads, the flash of a lantern, and somebody stooped, pulled out the hook, and let the skylight fall with a crash. Worse than that, by the sound that followed, it was clear that the somebody was fastening this possible method of escape.

"That's that," said Julius, almost cheerfully. "I'm afraid I'll have to wait for Coldharbour. Lie down and sleep, Miss Howett. He may not come yet."

It took a long time to persuade her to carry out his instructions. She found a light in the little cabin behind the curtain; the bunk had been made, the pillow-slips were clean, and looked almost inviting. She lay down, never imagining for a moment that she would doze, but she had hardly closed her eyes before she was asleep. Julius Savini put a chair against the door and sat down, his sword on his knees, a dishevelled figure, heavy eyed and aching in every limb. He alternately dozed and woke through the night. The day broke, the skylight showed grey and white and golden, as the first rays of the sun flooded the ship. And then, unexpectedly, it was flung up, and the face of Coldharbour Smith appeared.

Digitized by Google

"Good-morning, my little dear," he began, and then he saw Julius, and the face disappeared.

Julius Savini, alert and tense, heard the key turn in the lock, and waited ready to spring. The door was pushed open suddenly, and he confronted the levelled barrel of Coldharbour Smith's Browning.

Before the levelled Browning, Julius dropped his hands.

"Let us have a little talk, Julius," said Smith. "And first of all, put that sword on the table."

There was nothing to do but to obey.

"What's the great idea?" demanded Smith. "Who sent you here?"

Julius Savini was a man of quick inspirations, and he had one now.

"The old man," he said nonchalantly. "He got a bit worried about the girl, and he told me to come aboard and see you. He wants you to let her go back."

Smith's lips curled in an ugly smile.

"Like hell I will!" he said briefly. "What's the idea, Julius? If he sent you aboard, why didn't you come straight to me?"

"I couldn't find your cabin. At least, I thought this was your cabin, and dropped in because I didn't want the sailors to see me. I'd hardly got in before somebody closed the skylight."

Smith nodded.

"They shut it because I told them to," he said; "but I never thought I'd trapped such a bird as you! So Bellamy wants me to take her ashore, does he? And has Bellamy made arrangements for getting me out of trouble over this affair? You're lying, Julius." He looked at the man keenly. "Your clothes are all covered with dust, and what are you doing with that sword? I'm going to hold you and find out from the old man what your game is. You'd do anything for money, Savini." Then, as an idea struck him: "Did Featherstone put you aboard?" He slapped his thigh. "That's it! You're a stool pigeon, are you? Well, isn't that surprising?"

He whistled shrilly, and a dark-skinned sailor came clat-

Digitized by Google

tering down the companionway, and to him Smith spoke in a low voice. He went away and came back with a pair of rusty handcuffs.

"I do a bit of police work myself sometimes," said Coldharbour Smith. "Put 'em out, Julius!"

Julius Savini obeyed, and the irons clicked about his wrists. He was rushed across the deck and through a narrow door into the dark foc'sle.

"Sit down with your back to the bulkhead," Smith commanded, and when this was done he strapped the Eurasian's feet together. "If the old man says you are telling the truth, I'm going to apologise to you, Julius," he said pleasantly. "In the meantime you'll stay there, and I'll decide what I'll do with you when we're at sea."

He slammed the door tight and turned the iron catch which held it, and Julius Savini grinned to himself, for the handcuffs were just a size too large, and he had freed his wrists before the sound of Coldharbour Smith's footsteps died away in the distance.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLIX

The Questioning of Lacy

It was late in the afternoon when a detective, who was apparently killing time in the Commercial Road, saw a familiar face.

"Lacy, if I'm not mistaken," he said, and caught his man scientifically.

"What's wrong, Johnson?" asked the prisoner innocently. "I don't remember that the police have got anything against me?"

"You'll take a little walk with me," said the detective, and Lacy, who did not know what was in store for him, or he would have fought, meekly accompanied his captor to the nearest police station, protesting his ignorance of any reason why the police should behave in this strange and, to him, inexplicable manner.

Captain Featherstone interviewed him in the cell, but did not disclose the charge on which he had been arrested. To Jim this was one of the most critical moments of his life, for he had decided upon an act which, he knew, might bring him into disgrace, and lead to the abandonment of the career he had mapped out for himself. But there was nothing in life that could balance against Valerie Howett's safety. He would have gladly surrendered his own life, if by so doing he could restore the girl to her father.

Jim lived in St. James's Street, which, on a Saturday night, is one of the quietest streets in London, for all the stream of road traffic which passes ceaselessly up and down.

"I'll take this man to Scotland Yard to interrogate him. No, I shan't want your assistance, Johnson, thank you. You will be noted to the Commissioner for your arrest."

To Mr. Lacy's surprise, he was taken out of the cell and placed in a comfortable motor-car, with Jim at the wheel.

Digitized by Google

"You may for the moment regard yourself as not being under arrest," said Jim.

"Where am I going?"

"You're coming to my flat," was the surprising reply.

"What am I being held for, Captain?" asked Lacy curiously.

"I'll tell you that in due course," was the short reply, and Lacy gave himself over to the mental discussion of all sorts of interesting possibilities.

The car stopped before a shuttered shop, above which Jim's flat was situated. There were no other tenants; the shopkeeper lived in one of the suburbs.

Angus, the valet, met the pair on the landing.

"Give Mr. Lacy a drink," said Jim, "then take the car to the garage, and don't come back."

He himself went to his room and took off his coat, vest, and collar, and when he came back Angus had fulfilled his duties and was waiting.

"Take the car, and don't come back tonight," said Jim again, and Mr. Lacy, a glass of whisky and soda in his hand, wondered, and for the first time was a little nervous.

"Finished, Lacy?" said Jim, when the door had closed on his valet. "Now will you step into my study?"

It was not so much a study as a gymnasium, a large room, bare of carpet. Attached to a beam in the ceiling were two stout cords, terminating in rings, and there was a punch-ball attachment at the farther end of the room. Jim closed the door and locked it and motioned the man to a seat.

"I don't know what you're rolling up your sleeves for, Captain," said the alarmed Lacy.

"I'll tell you later," said Jim. "Where is Miss Valerie Howett?"

"Miss who, sir?"

He had hardly uttered the words before a fist like iron caught him under the jaw and sent him with a crash against the wall. He got up slowly, whimpering.

"What did you do that for? You hit me again, and by God——"

Digitized by Google

"Where is Valerie Howett?" asked Jim in the same tone.

"I don't know," said Lacy defiantly.

This time he was prepared, and tried to parry, but they cut under his guard, those two lightning blows, and he fell with a crash.

"Get up," said Jim curtly.

"I'm not going to get up," said the man, nursing his bruised face. "I'll report you for this, Featherstone. I'll have that coat off your back——"

"Get up," said Jim, "and don't harbour any illusions that you won't be hurt while you're sitting. Get up!"

"I'll see you in hell first," snarled the older man, and leapt as Jim Featherstone's boot drove at him.

"I'll have you for this. My God! I'll settle you for this, Featherstone. I'll be before the Commissioner on Monday morning!"

"If you're alive," said Jim. There was a look in his eye which gave the phrase a special significance. "I'm telling you this"—his finger jerked out to the man—"that, unless you tell me what I want to know, I'm going to tie you down to that floor, and I'm going to burn you until you tell."

"That's torture!" shrieked the man. "You can't torture me. You wouldn't dare—it is against the law!"

"Bellamy once told me that he believed in torture," said Jim slowly, "and I thought he was a brute. But I'll not leave the flesh on your bones if you don't tell me where Valerie Howett is."

The man stared at him awhile, then, with a scream, sprang for the door. Jim's arm shot him back again.

Fear gave Lacy courage, and he leapt at his captor. Jim stepped aside and brought him to the ground with a short swing to the body. There he lay gasping.

"Tell me where Valerie Howett is, and I will give you a thousand pounds."

"I wouldn't do it for a million," blubbered Lacy. "She's where you won't get her, you swine! Smith's got her, and——"

He was jerked instantly to his feet and smacked against the wall as though he were a wicker figure.

Digitized by Google

"Is life sweet to you, Lacy?" Jim's voice was low and vibrant. "Are there no friends, no women you want to meet again, no places you ever wish to see?"

"I'll die before I tell you," gasped Lacy.

"You will die after you tell me," said Jim Featherstone, and jerked him to the ground.

With one pull he tore vest and shirt from the man. It was the brutality of it, the horrible threat of it, that broke the prisoner's resolution.

"I'll tell, I'll tell!" he screamed. "She's on the *Contessa.*"

"You're a liar, she isn't."

"I'll swear to you she is, Captain. We were on the ship when you came there last night, in the chain locker. She tried to scream, but Smith had his hand on her mouth. I can prove it; I heard you saying, as you walked by, that she wasn't there."

"Get up," said Jim. He pointed to a stool. "Now sit down. When were you on the *Contessa* last?"

"I left last night. I never could stand those little ships —they make me ill."

"And the lady was there then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is she? In what part of the ship?"

"Coldharbour had it all fixed up for her. The *Contessa's* been running rum to America. She practically belongs to Smith. It was his idea that the fires shouldn't be lit, and that she should stay in the Pool for a day or two until the affair had blown over."

Jim unlocked the door and went back to the sitting-room.

"Finish your whisky," he said.

"You're not going to charge me, are you, Captain—not after the pasting you've given me?"

"If what you say is true, I'll not charge you," Jim replied. "Drink up your whisky. I shall hold you tonight. If your statement is accurate, you shall go free within two hours. If it's not, I shall bring you back here, and we will have a heart-to-heart talk."

Lacy said nothing.

Digitized by Google

On their way to Scotland Yard, Mr. Lacy nursing his injuries, Jim asked:

"Did you see Julius Savini?"

"Julius?" said the other contemptuously. "He's not in this business at all."

"I have an idea that he's very much in it," said Jim.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER L

The Passing of Savini

The sleeping cabin in which Valerie Howett spent the greater part of a day that seemed unending showed unmistakable evidence that it had been got ready for her use. An opening had been rough-sawn through, to what Smith described as the washing-place, and which was, in reality, the only bath-room the steamer possessed. The door leading to the alleyway beyond had been screwed up, and here too the dead lights were so tightly clamped over the portholes that, exerting all her strength, she was unable to move the wing screws that held them in place.

One discovery she had made was of a sliding door between the cabin and the saloon. Its end was concealed by the hanging curtains, and she only found it by accident when Smith was out of the saloon. This was some slight protection, for it fastened to the wall of the cabin when closed, though it would take very little time to batter it down.

She had witnessed the scene between Smith and Julius, and later had ventured to ask what had happened to the intrepid Savini.

"He's safe," was all the reply she received.

It was one of the trials of the day that Coldharbour Smith took his meals with her. He was a man without breeding, and his manners were elementary.

"You'll get used to me after a while, Valerie, my dear," he said as he munched noisily. "I'm beginning to like you already. And I'm not the kind of man to take likings to strange girls. Now at the Golden East . . ."

Valerie listened and shuddered, and he seemed to take her obvious revulsion as a compliment.

"We're sailing tonight. The skipper thinks there will be a bit of a fog and that we'll be able to slip down the river without anybody noticing—not that the police will board us again."

"You can't hope to escape," she said with sudden

Digitized by Google

vehemence. "Do you imagine that when I get to wherever you are taking me, I shall not complain to the police?"

He smiled complacently.

"You'll be my wife then, and it will be your word against mine."

"Where is my mother?" she asked.

He laughed aloud.

"I don't know. The old man took her away years ago. There's no sense in pretending I don't know, because I do. She used to lodge in my house in Camden Town. She was only there a week, hiding."

"Hiding?"

Coldharbour nodded.

"From Bellamy. He was very fond of her, like I am of you, but she turned him down. I'd just done a job for Abe and made good money. He found that she was looking for new lodgings and he sent me to see her. I told her I'd heard she was in want of rooms and I had a little place. So she came, for the rent was low. She thought Bellamy had gone to America—he always had six alibis ready in case of trouble, but he went no farther than Queenstown, so she thought she was safe. One night I told her the same tale as Lacy told you; got her to go to Garre with me because I said her little girl was there—that was you. And you couldn't have been so little either," he said; "must have been about sixteen then. That's the last I saw of her—when I showed her into the castle." He smiled knowingly. "The old man says she's escaped——"

"Escaped!"

Valerie jumped to her feet, her eyes blazing with excitement.

"Sit down, sit down," said Coldharbour testily, "and don't get excited. The old man is lying. She's dead, that's about the size of it. He couldn't tell the truth, old Abe." A frown came to his face and made him even more unprepossessing. "I owe the old devil something—I almost wish she had got away. But it's a fake—all this stuff about the Green Archer is a fake. Abe put it up so that he'd have an excuse if this woman got away. Green Archer!"

Digitized by Google

He laughed softly.

Valerie was thinking hard. Suppose it were true! It might be. There would be at least an explanation for Bellamy's vengeance on her. But he must have planned her abduction long before the escape, just as soon as he had discovered that Valerie Howett was the child he had stolen twenty-three years before.

"I expect she's dead," Coldharbour went on cheerfully. "You can't keep a woman locked up in an underground dungeon for eight years without breaking her up. Why, even at Dartmoor, where you get air and exercise——"

"Then she was there all the time," said Valerie.

"Of course she was there all the time," was the contemptuous answer. "I don't know in what part of the castle, but she was there."

This was at lunch—a meal she left almost untouched. In the afternoon there was great activity on board the *Contessa*. She heard constant movement above her head and the sound of voices bellowing. There was a pump at work somewhere below, and the ceaseless thump of it drove her distracted.

She had seen none of the officers or crew except the negro steward who served the meals, but she guessed that they were few in number and wondered where the captain found accommodation. And what had happened to Julius? She dare not let her mind rest on Jim and her father, nor could she contemplate her own fate.

Smith came down to dinner, and she saw at once that he had been drinking. His unhealthy face was grotesquely marked by two red patches over his high cheek-bones. He looked like an ugly doll that had been badly painted.

"Merry and bright, little woman?" he demanded loudly. "I've brought you some wine—demn'n rum!"

He shrieked with merriment at his own jest.

"Pro'bish'n's very bad, but it's made a lot of money for some of us."

He slammed a black bottle on the table as he sat down.

"Ole Julius, eh? Come sneaking on board to give me away to the police! Left his little wife for a life on the

Digitized by Google

ocean! Can you beat that? But he hasn't got a little wife like mine!"

He leered across at her and tried to catch her hand. Failing in this, he pulled the cork from the bottle with his teeth and poured out a glass of amber fluid.

"Drink!" he commanded.

She pushed the glass aside.

"Drink!"

"I will not drink," she said, and flung the glass and its contents on the floor.

The action apparently afforded him the greatest amusement.

"That's what I like—spirit!" he chuckled, and without another word tackled the huge plate of food that the steward had set before him.

Presently he wiped his mouth, tossed down another glass of the brandy, and rose unsteadily to his feet.

"My little love!" he began, and made a wild clutch at her.

She swung round on the swivel chair and shrank back.

"Come to me!" he shouted. "I want you——"

But with the courage of despair she fought him back and, wrenching herself free from the hand that had grasped her sleeve, she flew into her cabin, pulled the door tight and hooked it.

"Come out!" he roared, beating on the panel with his fist. The wood shivered but did not break. His rage was demoniacal. He tore with his nails at the edge of the door; he kicked and beat at it, and all the time his foul tongue babbled horribly.

"I'll have you out!" she heard his hoarse voice and trembled. "Savini put you up to that—Savini . . . !"

He rushed out and across the short space of deck which intervened between the saloon and the place where he had left his prisoner. Mad with drink and baffled desire, murder was in his heart.

Turning the catch of the foc'sle door, he flung it back.

"Savini! I'm going to finish you—d'ye hear?"

There was no answer, and he groped along the floor for the man he had left. But Savini had disappeared.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LI

The Green Arrow

The shock of the discovery sobered the man. He came from one darkness to another and called a sailor.

"Who opened that door?" he asked.

"I took him food about two hours ago," said the man.

"Did you fasten the door after you?"

"Yes—he wanted water. I went to get him a can, and only then was the door unfastened."

Coldharbour Smith struck a match and searched the prison. As he expected, the handcuffs and rope were on the floor. Making his way for'ard over the boat deck, he found the captain in his chart-house.

"Emil, how soon can you get away?" he asked.

"In two hours the tide will turn," said the little Spaniard; "but, my friend, look at this infernal mist!"

Already the mist was thick, and such lights as were visible were dim blurs.

"That's all to the good. Can you get away at once?"

"It is not possible." The Spaniard was emphatic. "There is not sufficient steam. Perhaps in an hour, but if this fog grows thicker, what am I to do?"

"Go through it," said Coldharbour. "You know the river—get to sea."

He went back to the saloon, and with a glance at the closed door of Valerie's cabin sat down to consider his position. If Julius had got ashore . . .

Coldharbour Smith pulled his gun from his pocket and laid it on the table before him.

Valerie made no sound—he wished he hadn't frightened her. But chief of his wishes had to do with Julius. Where was he? If he was ashore, then the end was near. Suppose he was still on board: there were a dozen places where a man might hide.

Digitized by Google

With this thought in his mind, he went out on to the deck and peered through the thickening yellow mist. He saw a boat and a man pulling leisurely toward the ship. Only one man, he was certain—perhaps one of the sailors returning from the shore. Watching the solitary rower, he discovered that his destination was elsewhere, for he passed under the steamer's bows and faded into the fog.

Once again Smith went back to the saloon, seating himself at the end of the table so that he had a clear view of the open door.

Julius was the point on which his future turned. If there was danger, real danger, he would show no mercy to this girl. If he was to be punished, there should be cause. His keen ears were strained for the noise of oars, for a voice hailing the *Contessa*. At the first hint that Featherstone was coming, he would close and lock the door. . . .

Brooding he sat, and the minutes passed. Once he heard the captain giving instructions about raising the anchor, and the steam capstan was tested and found wanting. He heard a faint shuffle of stockinged feet and looked up. For a second he stared, and then his hand shot out and gripped the butt of his automatic. . . .

* * * * *

The launch which was picking its way across the foggy waters steered without error to the side of the *Contessa*.

Jim had some premonition of what might happen, and had given instructions that the engines should be shut off the moment the vessel was located.

Her weigh carried the boat to the side of the ship, and Jim leapt on board, followed by the River Police. The decks were empty, the door of the saloon closed.

"Go forward and hold the captain," he whispered, and one of the men crept up the ladder to the boat deck.

Jim moved to the door of the saloon and turned the handle softly. To his relief the door opened, and he stepped in. The saloon was in darkness, absolute silence reigned. Taking a flash lamp from his pocket, he sent a

Digitized by Google

ray of light travelling round the wall of the saloon, and presently it rested on the door of the cabin in which Valerie had been confined. A brief examination showed the nature of the door, and he pulled it back. A light burnt in the cabin, Valerie's furs lay on the bed, but she was not there. Nor was she in the adjoining compartment.

He returned to the saloon and sent the light along the table, and then he jumped back and raised his gun. He had seen the shape of a man in a chair at the table end.

"Hands up!" he called, and focussed the figure with his lamp.

In the circle of light sat Coldharbour Smith. He lay back in his chair, one hand resting on the table gripping an automatic, his sightless eyes staring up at the open skylight.

He was dead, and from his breast stuck the green-feathered shaft of an arrow.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LII

The Man in the Boat

Jim called in the River Police inspector, and they lit the saloon's lamp before making a further examination.

Coldharbour Smith must have died instantly. The arrow had passed through the heart and had been driven with such force that it had penetrated the wood of the chair-back.

"He saw whatever he saw, and reached for his gun," said Jim. "How long has he been dead?"

The hands were warm.

"He must have been killed whilst we were coming alongside; the lamp-shade was hot—did you notice that?"

He waited not a second longer than was necessary, and hurried out in search of the captain. The little man was in tears, which developed into something like hysteria when he learnt of the tragedy.

"I knew there was a lady on board," he sobbed, "but by"—he mentioned a number of saints rapidly—"I did not know that there was any wrong. I am a man of sensibility and kindness, senor, and if I had known that the lady was not Señor Smith's wife . . ."

"Where is the lady now?" demanded Jim sharply. "I warn you that if you are playing tricks with me you will not see Vigo again in a hurry."

By now the second pinnace was alongside, and the ship was swarming with uniformed men. From keel to crow's-nest the search went on, but without discovering the girl.

"The saloon skylight is wide open, sir," reported one of the policemen. "That's queer on a night like this."

Jim had noticed this too. An examination of the top deck showed a length of rope ladder fastened awkwardly and evidently by an unskilled hand to a stanchion. Moreover, a boat was missing. This the captain discovered. It

Digitized by Google

had been swung out and half-lowered to afford a foothold to men who had been caulking a sprung plate. Now the supporting bolts dangled empty at the end of the ropes.

Valerie could not have lowered the boat by herself—of that Jim was sure.

Where was Julius Savini? The captain offered information.

"The poor Smith had him locked in the rope-store, but he escaped and swam to land."

Then it came out that the man who had taken Julius his food had seen him swimming in the water and had thrown a heavy bolt at him. He had not dared tell Smith that the prisoner had escaped that way.

Going back to the saloon, Jim ordered in more lights and went to work to make a minute inspection of the room.

"A typical Green Archer killing," he said when he had finished. "The arrow struck in exactly the same place as it did in the case of Creager. Not so much as a finger-print to show the murderer—perhaps executioner is a better word."

"How will he get ashore?" asked the puzzled inspector. "Unless he knows the river he'll never make it on a foggy night like this."

Jim, with a sinking of heart, realised that the same applied to the girl—unless she was with the Green Archer.

Once the shore was sighted it would be simple to land, for hereabouts every narrow street that ran from the long wharf road terminated in a landing slope.

The Green Archer was in all probability on the river at that moment, rowing blindly through the mist in a vain search for safety.

Leaving a boat's crew to hold the ship, Jim took the first of the launches and began a systematic quartering of the river. Once there loomed out of the fog a slow-moving ship that boomed a warning when they were almost under her bows.

"The *Gaika*—tender to the G.I.C. trawler fleet," said the inspector. "We ought to have smelt her. She's fishy!"

At intervals the engines of the launch were stopped, and

Digitized by Google

they listened for the sound of oars, but it was not until they were nearing the north bank that they were rewarded.

"There's a boat near—listen," whispered the river man and, bending his head, Jim heard the unsteady clump of oars against rowlocks.

"He's not a waterman," said the inspector. "One oar is working ahead of the other."

Presently the sound was located and the launch went slowly ahead. The bulk of a warehouse showed before them through a thinner patch of mist, and then Jim saw the boat. One man was rowing, and he was bringing its nose alongside one of the street-end quays.

Instantly the launch gathered speed and flew in pursuit, coming to a stop beside the craft as its occupant was stepping out.

"Stop, you!" called Jim, and jumped ashore to the slimy quay.

The figure turned and peered at him.

"Isn't that Featherstone?" it asked, and Jim stood stock still in his astonishment. For it was the voice of Mr. Howett.

"Why. . . . Why, Mr. Howett, what are you doing here?"

"I heard you were going to the *Contessa* and followed you," said Howett calmly. "I found this boat, or rather, I saw a man row in as I was searching for a boat, and asked him if I might take it."

It seemed on the face of it an improbable story. From any other man Jim would have rejected it instantly as an invention.

"Have you found her?" asked Mr. Howett. His tone was extraordinarily steady.

"No; she is not on board. Smith is dead."

"Dead! And Valerie is not there? How did Smith die?"

"He was killed by the Green Archer," said Jim, and Mr. Howett was silent.

"Valerie has either escaped or has been taken from the ship," Jim went on. "I am going back to Scotland Yard. Will you come, Mr. Howett?"

Digitized by Google

The other nodded.

"Dead?" he muttered. "Quite dead?"

"As dead as he will ever be," said Jim.

He reached the Yard an hour later, for the fog lay thick on the city and travelling was difficult, but no news awaited him. He had left the murder in the hands of the river division, but, tired as he was, he wrote a brief report after seeing Mr. Howett back to his hotel.

All stations were seeking the girl, and his writing was interrupted a dozen times by the arrival of reports.

He had finished, and was on the point of leaving, when Fay Clayton was announced.

She came in, red-eyed and haggard.

"Have you found Julius?" she asked.

Jim shook his head.

"I hope he is safe," he said. "Smith held him prisoner on board the *Contessa*, a little steamer lying in the river, but apparently he escaped. Tell me, Fay, is Savini a good swimmer?"

Fay smiled in spite of her worry.

"My Julius can swim where whales would drown!" she said proudly. "He's the greatest swimmer you ever saw, Featherstone. If that boy was wrecked in the Atlantic Ocean he'd swim—why?"

"Because he jumped overboard. It was a little foggy, but if he can swim he's safe."

Her assurance vanished and she became the agitated wife once more.

"He'll be drowned! Why aren't you looking for him, Featherstone? Leaving him there in the water with nobody to search for him—it's murder!"

Jim dropped his hand on her shoulder.

"Julius is all right, my girl," he said kindly. "I wish I could be as sure about Miss Howett."

It was in his mind to say that Julius was not born to be drowned, but tactfully he forebore. Then he told her about Coldharbour Smith's end.

"He deserved it," she said promptly. "That man wasn't meant to live, Featherstone. He was beast right through—

Digitized by Google

you don't think my Julius did it, do you?" she asked suddenly. "Julius wouldn't recognise a bow and arrow if he saw one."

Jim quieted her fears that suspicion might attach to the admirable Savini, and sent her home.

The buses and tubes were not running at this hour, and no cabs were available. She walked, finding her way with some difficulty. It was past two o'clock when, weary and footsore, she came to the block where her flat was. As she reached the door, she saw a car drawn up by the pavement, and remembered that it had passed her a few minutes before.

In the shadow of the locked entrance a man was standing, and she had only to see him to realise that it was Abel Bellamy.

"I want to get in," he said gruffly. "A friend of mine is living here. I didn't know they shut the outer doors."

"You can't come in, Mr. Bellamy," said the girl hotly. "After the way you've treated my husband, I wonder you have the nerve to come—and at this hour!"

He glowered down at her.

"So you're the woman, eh? . . . Mrs. Julius Savini? Well, I'm coming in because I've got a few words to say to your husband."

"Say 'em to me," said Fay, "and say 'em quick, because I'm tired."

"You can tell him that I've discovered that three thousand dollars have been stolen from my safe, and that I am applying for his arrest. That's all, Mrs. Savini."

She caught his arm as he turned to go.

"Wait. It's a frame-up, but you're too clever to have left him any chance. Come in and let me hear about it."

He followed her up the stairs and into the flat.

"Come in here," she said, switching on the light of the dining-room.

The first view of him at close quarters appalled her.

"My God, you're a beauty!" she gasped, and his lip went up.

"Beauty, am I?" he said, seating his huge frame on the

Digitized by Google

most solid of the chairs. "I guess I can return the compliment."

"Now what about this steal, Mr. Bellamy?" she asked. "I know Julius hasn't done it, because he's not that kind."

"Not that kind, isn't he?" he sneered. "You know better. Anyway, I'm not accusing him—and I've lost no money. But I wanted a talk with you, young woman."

"You've got a nerve!" she exploded. "Lying your way into my house! Now you can get out, or I'll 'phone the police."

His cold eyes held hers for a spell, and under their magnetic gaze her courage oozed away.

"You'll not 'phone for the police," he said. "I want to speak to Julius."

"He's not here, I tell you."

The old man's head jerked sideways.

"Go look," he said.

She hesitated.

"Go look!" he growled, and she went out of the room. What made her open the door of Jerry's old room she did not know. It was the nearest, perhaps. She turned on the light and fell back in amazement. Julius was lying on the bed, a soiled, collarless, unshaven man, fast asleep.

At first she could not believe her eyes, then with a cry she sprang to him and caught him in her arms, sobbing her relief on his soiled coat. Julius woke slowly and painfully, blinking at the light.

"'Lo," he said. "Fay . . . hope you don't mind . . . told her to go to your room."

Fay flew out into her own room. Lying on the bed, covered with an eiderdown, was a girl, and there was no need to ask who the sleeper was.

Valerie moved in her sleep and sighed, and Fay Clayton, crook and worldling, stooped over her and kissed her cheek.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LIII

An Offer and a Rejection

When she returned to Julius, he was sitting on the edge of the bed, prosaically rubbing his hair.

"What is wrong, Fay?" he asked quickly.

"Bellamy is here," she said.

He screwed up his eyes in an effort to concentrate his thoughts.

"Bellamy—Abel Bellamy here? What does he want?"

"He wants to see you. How long have you been in, Julius?"

He shook his head.

"I don't know—some time, I think."

He had taken off his boots when he lay down, and he looked round for them helplessly. The man was drugged with sleepiness. She found him some slippers.

"Don't see him, Julius, if you don't want to."

"I'll see him," said Julius with a twisted smile. "Is Miss Howett all right?"

Fay nodded, and with many yawnings and stretchings, Julius rose and followed the girl into the dining-room. It was a novel sensation for Julius to meet the eyes of the man of whom he had lived in terror, yet he could face Bellamy with a certain strange serenity.

"Well, what have you to say for yourself?" asked the old man.

"Don't bully me," replied Julius with a wave of his hand, as if he were sweeping the whole vision of Abel Bellamy out of his mind.

"Where is the girl?"

"Which girl?" asked Julius innocently.

"The girl you followed to the *Contessa*."

"She's home," said Julius airily.

Digitized by Google

"I guess it comes natural for you to lie. She's here, in this house, or flat, or whatever you call the place. You were seen bringing her in."

"Then why the devil did you ask me if you knew?" demanded Julius irritably. "Yes, she's here."

The old man bit his lip.

"How did you get away?"

"That's nothing to do with you," said the bold Julius, and the old man swallowed something.

"And Smith didn't see you——?"

"Smith is dead."

It was Fay who made the startling announcement, and Julius gaped at her.

"Dead?" he said incredulously. "Dead?"

She nodded.

"Who told you this?" asked Bellamy.

"Featherstone, about an hour ago."

"But how did he die? Who killed him?"

"The Green Archer," said Fay, and Abe Bellamy came to his feet with an oath.

"You're mad!" he said. "The Green Archer—was he seen?"

"What's the good of asking me questions? Now see here, Mr. Bellamy, I'm not an information bureau; I'm only telling you what I have been told. Coldharbour Smith was found in the saloon dead, with a green arrow through his heart. That's all I know about it."

They looked at each other, husband and wife, and in Savini's eyes was a look of uneasiness which he did not attempt to disguise. As for Abe Bellamy, the news had momentarily stunned him.

"So much the better," he said at last, and then: "Savini, you and I understand one another. I'm not going to make a long story, but I'm offering you ten thousand pounds—which is fifty thousand dollars—and I'm giving your wife the same amount, if you'll do something for me. You know what it means—a hundred thousand dollars, which will bring in interest of six or seven thousand dollars a year—a man can live comfortably abroad on that amount."

Digitized by Google

"You're not offering this for nothing," said Fay sternly. "What do you want us to do?"

Abel Bellamy pointed through the door.

"That girl in there," he said. "Bring her to Garre Castle. Bring her tonight. We will go down together, all of us; my car is at the door."

Julius shook his head.

"There are a lot of things I would do for money, Mr. Bellamy, but that isn't one of them. You couldn't name the sum that would make me do it, either."

Fay nodded in agreement with her husband.

"Nobody will know," said Bellamy, lowering his voice to a husky whisper. "The girl has disappeared from the ship. Nobody knows even that you were with her. It is money for nothing, Savini. I'll make it fifteen thousand——"

"If you made it fifteen million, it'd be just the same," said Fay. "Julius won't do it, and I'd hate him if he did. We've lived on mugs for years, Julius and I, but they've got to be men, and they've got to have nothing more to lose than their money."

Abe Bellamy dropped his eyes to the table and stood for a long time in thought, then he turned up the collar of his coat.

"Very well," he said in a milder tone. "We'll let it go at that. You can return to Garre on Monday morning, Savini. I'll see if I can't give you a better job with bigger pay."

"I'm not coming back to Garre."

Abe spun round.

"You're not, eh?" he said menacingly. "I suppose you think that you'll get more out of Howett than you'll get from me?"

"I don't care if I never get a bean out of Howett," said the indignant Julius. "I'm not doing this for money. And besides——" he stopped, remembering his original intention; then, to the surprise of his wife: "I'll come back to Garre on Monday morning, Mr. Bellamy," he said.

The old man looked at him for a while and nodded.

Digitized by Google

"I think you're wise," he said.

Fay saw him to the door and closed and bolted it on him. Then, before she returned to Savini, she put a call through to Jim Featherstone, and gave him a message which sent him running into the fog, without greatcoat or hat.

"You're not to make a noise," whispered Fay, letting him

"She's still sleeping. What did I tell you, Featherstone? Julius got her away. My! That man is the most wonderful thing. . . ." She apostrophised Julius in loud whispers all the way down the passage.

Julius was in his dressing-gown, wide awake but hollow eyed.

"She's wonderful, Captain," he said, as he shook the other's hand warmly. "I've just been through to Mr. Howett and told him that Miss Howett is safe and sleeping."

"How did you get away?"

"It was easy and it was hard," said Julius cryptically. "I got rid of my handcuffs and unfastened my feet. It was only a question of getting the door open, and I had to wait till evening before any of those brutes thought of bringing me food. When the door was opened, I jumped at it, and before the sailor could realise what had happened, I was over the side and into the water—he nearly caught me with something particularly heavy that he threw after me, but I dived. The fog was thick and the water was very cold, and I hadn't been in it long before I realised that a half-starved man was in no condition to find his way to the shore. Then the feeling came to me that I was deserting Miss Howett, and I turned and swam round to the other side of the ship, and hung on to the mooring chain for a bit. I was getting cramped and scared, when I saw a rope hanging from a boat that was half-lowered. I don't know how I managed to climb into that boat, for I was as weak as a rat. But at last I managed it, and lay quiet for a little while, wondering what I should do next. Did you ever try sitting in an open boat, wet to the skin, with a fog fastening down the wetness so that it stayed wet? It's a wonderful cure for swollen head. At last I could stand it no more,

Digitized by Google

but clambered up on the top deck. I heard voices in the saloon and opened the skylight. Smith was drunk, and he was getting fresh with Miss Howett, but she threw him off and ran into her room and shut the door. I think it was finding the length of rope ladder in one of the boats that decided me as to what I should do. I had hauled it up with me and fastened it to one of the stanchions, intending to use it to get up and down from the boat. It was when I saw Smith dash out of the saloon in search of me that I had my inspiration. I pushed up the skylight, dropped the end of the rope ladder into the saloon, and went down it hand over fist. I was scared stiff," he confessed frankly, "for fear lest this fellow came back. It took me an awful time to persuade Miss Howett that it was me, and not Coldharbour Smith, but at last she opened the door, and I held the ladder while she went up, and followed as soon as she was clear. I didn't dare trust the weight of both of us. We were down in the boat before you could say 'knife.' I didn't understand the working of the davits, but Miss Howett, who had done a lot of yachting, showed me how to pay out the rope and lower the boat. She took one end and I took the other. We had the boat in the water and unshackled in a minute. That is about all, except that it took us a long time to find a landing-place. We had wonderful luck in finding a taxi-cab, and I suggested that Miss Howett should come here—I did not know where her father was, and I knew Fay would look after her."

"When you came away from the *Contessa*," asked Jim, "did you see any other boat?"

"We saw a little boat with one man rowing. He was on the south side of the ship, and we wondered who he was. He wasn't near enough to distinguish him.

"Do you think he was the Green Archer?" he asked quickly.

"It might have been," replied Jim.

"Queer," said Julius thoughtfully. "We hailed him because we weren't certain of our direction. He must have heard us, yet he didn't reply."

Jim got up.

Digitized by Google

"Thank God you got away," he said. "Now you'd better go to bed, Savini. Mr. Howett will be here early in the morning with Miss Howett's maid. Fay"—he took the girl's hand in his—"I am beginning to share your amazing faith in Julius Savini. And if we ever meet professionally in circumstances which we should all deplore, you will have a very good friend at court."

Julius had not told him about the old man's visit, and Fay reminded her husband after the detective had taken his departure.

"No," said Julius, scratching his rough chin, "I don't think it would have been wise. You heard what he said, Fay—Featherstone, I mean? He might be useful in case of a get-away," he said speculatively. "I had an idea that I might make big money out of a certain person, but even that idea has got a little distasteful, and I'm going back to the old plan. I think Bellamy will be very sorry he invited me back."

"Maybe you'll be more sorry," said Fay prophetically.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LIV

Found in the Boat

A party of five cheerful people sat down to lunch at the Carlton next day. It was Sunday, and the big restaurant was not so well filled. But to two people, at least, all the world sat about that table.

Mr. Howett was grave and preoccupied. He was, indeed, so intent on his thoughts that he had to be reminded, every time a waiter put a plate before him, that there was a dish to be discussed. When he joined in the conversation at all, it was curiously enough, at the provocation of Julius. Julius was explaining some part he had played in the rescue, when Spike Holland drifted in; and when Spike Holland came into the Carlton it was an invariable sign that he had a host hovering somewhere in the background. The host proved to be the good-looking man with the grey hair whom Valerie remembered dining at the next table on a day when Jim Featherstone's occupation was unknown to her.

Jim rose and bowed as John Wood passed. This time their table was on the other side of the restaurant. They had been seated a little while when Spike came over to them.

"A man who commits a murder on Saturday deserves instant death," he said bitterly. "All the Sunday papers are filled with that Green Archer story, and it's mine, Captain Featherstone! I didn't get a word till I saw it in the papers."

"Too bad," smiled Jim. "But I don't arrange these things, Spike, otherwise you should have had a beat on it. I'll give you the real story after lunch. I see you've got your baby man in tow?"

"Yes, he came over yesterday and spent the night at my

Digitized by Google

apartments. He's starting his Babies Home in England, and wants to negotiate with old man Bellamy for the purchase of Garre Castle—what do you think of that for an idea? Says he won't be happy till the battlements are lined with two-year-olds defying the Green Archer with rattles. Curiously, he thinks that Garre Castle would make an ideal headquarters for such an institution; and although he doesn't like Bellamy, he is going to Garre this week to see him."

"Do you know him very well?" said Mr. Howett, suddenly taking an interest.

"Not too well. I've a journalistic acquaintance with him, but he's a real good fellow and worth knowing. By the way, Mr. Howett," asked Spike carelessly, "were you in London about fifteen years ago?"

Mr. Howett inclined his head.

"I was up at the Toxophilite Society the other day," said Spike, "making enquiries with the idea of tracking down the archer, and in one of the competitions I saw your name as a winner—L. B. Howett."

"I was interested just a little," said Howett shortly. "We used to have an archery society in Philadelphia years ago. I believe it is dead now. I remember I entered into an archery competition while I was here on a visit. I was feeling rather lonely, and I saw the announcement of the competition, but I don't remember what was the result."

"But, daddy, I never knew that you were interested in archery," said the girl in astonishment.

"I was. I am no longer," answered Mr. Howett, and turned the conversation into other directions.

Julius was listening all a-tingle with excitement, but the conversation drifted into other channels.

"He's a remarkable-looking man," said Valerie, looking after Spike as he walked back to his table. "I don't know that I've ever seen a face that so fascinated me."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Jim.

"How old would you say he was?" she asked, ignoring the interruption.

"It is difficult to tell. He might be thirty-eight, and he

Digitized by Google

might as well be twenty-eight.
maturely grey."

"Tell me about him," she asked, and with admirable self-restraint, for no man cares to recount the virtues of another man to the woman he loves, Jim told the story of John Wood's hobby.

"I think I've told it you all before," he said when he finished. "He has a remarkable face, and he's a remarkable man. He has no other interest in life than child welfare. I don't think I've ever met a man who was more completely absorbed by his hobby."

"He doesn't like Mr. Bellamy: does he know him?"

"Yes," said Jim, "he knows him very well. He was a friend of Bellamy's nephew. In fact, young Bellamy left him all his property when he died. I looked up the will; it was made in England and registered at Somerset House, and though the legacy was of no great value, consisting mainly of books and scientific instruments which the nephew had acquired during the war, the mere fact that all his possessions were left to Wood shows the affection he had. Incidentally, Wood gave me what I firmly hope was a clue to your own identity, Valerie," he said in a lower voice, and recounted the story of the kidnapped child and the railway accident. "I thought at first it was you, but it happened twenty years ago, when you were three years old, and obviously you were less than a year old when you passed into the Howetts' care."

She nodded thoughtfully.

"I seem to remember reading about the River Bend disaster. Of course, that settles it beyond doubt. It cannot be me—I know," she smiled, "because I have seen the clothes I wore when I came to the Howetts."

Jim was unprepared to learn that Mr. Howett proposed returning to Lady's Manor. He thought that, warned by the terrible experience of his foster-child, Howett would either keep her in town or take her back to America—this latter possibility was a source of some worry to the young man.

They left that afternoon, and Jim saw them off. The

Digitized by Google

inquest on Coldharbour Smith had been fixed for the Wednesday, and though he wished to spare her the ordeal, it was vital that she should give evidence.

He returned to the vestibule to get his coat and hat after the car had gone, and saw the man from Belgium and Spike Holland speaking together in a low tone. He did not want to interrupt their conference, but passed them with a smile.

Scotland Yard was a wilderness on Sunday, and Jim's visit was a matter of form, though, following this new development of the Green Archer mystery, there would be plenty of work for him on this particular occasion. The officer on the door desk stopped him as he was passing.

"Inspector Fair, of the River Division, is in your office, sir. I told him you would be returning. He said he'd wait. I think he wants to see you particularly. I telephoned to your flat."

It was a visit which Jim expected, though he was puzzled as to the urgency of the call. Inspector Fair, a weather-beaten man, who looked more of a sailor than a policeman, was sitting in an easy-chair when Jim went in.

"Sorry to bother you, Captain Featherstone, but do you remember last night we picked up a friend of yours who was getting out of the boat—Mr. Howett, I think it was?"

"Mr. Howett—yes," said Jim.

Inspector Fair picked up from the floor two objects which the chair had hidden, and laid them on Jim Featherstone's desk. One was a short, stout bow with a metal shaft, the second was the inevitable green arrow.

"Where did you find these?" asked Jim uncomprehendingly.

"In Mr. Howett's boat," replied the inspector.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LV

Valerie Tells a Story

Jim looked at the incriminating evidence for a long time without speaking. Then, grasping at a straw, he advanced what might well be an explanation.

"Mr. Howett said he saw a man row to the quay, and asked him if he might take the boat."

"Mr. Howett also said the man made no reply. I thought that was a curious story, didn't you, Captain Featherstone?" asked the other.

"I saw nothing curious about it," said Jim a little coldly. "It seemed very likely that the man was originally in the boat, and that, startled by seeing Mr. Howett standing on the quay, he either forgot to take away his weapon, or else he left it there deliberately to challenge attention."

"H'm!" said the River man, unconvinced. "It is your case, and I don't want to butt into it, Captain Featherstone; but if you'll take the advice of a man much older than yourself, you will not dissociate Mr. Howett entirely from any suspicion of having caused the death of Coldharbour Smith. After all, he would be justified, remembering that this scoundrel had taken his daughter."

"Mr. Howett—absurd!" said Jim.

"It may be absurd," replied the imperturbable officer, "but what are you going to do about it? Are you going to call Mr. Howett at the inquest? That is a most important point. Everybody who was seen on the river in those circumstances must be under suspicion, and must, I think, be called to inform the coroner as to what he saw or heard."

Jim was in a dilemma. It was impossible to keep the girl's name out of the case, but he wanted to limit the association of the Howetts to its narrowest confines. Who was the man that Valerie and Julius had seen rowing alone in the fog, and whom they had hailed, without eliciting an

Digitized by Google

answer? Was that Mr. Howett, or was it—the man for whom he was looking? He determined to examine Howett at the first opportunity. He was equally determined that Howett should not come into court.

In the meantime, there was this second arrow murder to be explained to a public grown weary of unpunished crimes.

Searching Smith's effects, a very large sum of money was discovered—mostly in United States currency. This meant that the person from whom the money was drawn originally could not be traced.

The inquest required the most delicate handling from the police point of view. Already the newspapers were filled with stories of the mysterious crime, and the killing of Creager was recalled, both pictorially and literally. And then, on the morning of the inquest, the *Daily Globe* came out with a beat. It was very nearly a complete record of the Green Archer's movements, and the newspaper had been careful to dissociate Abel Bellamy from both tragedies.

"The difficulty is," said Spike, making his usual call at Scotland Yard on the morning of the publication, "to bring him and either of the murders together. The only connection is the fact that Miss Howett lives at Lady's Manor, which is in Garre, and within range of the green fellow."

"I haven't dared read the account," said Jim. "I can only hope, Spike, that you have been discreet."

"Discretion is my weakness," said Spike; "and, after all, it's a straightforward story. Coldharbour Smith, a criminal, and a man with a criminal record, seized Miss Howett and decided to hold her to ransom. By a trick he gets her on board the *Contessa* and is on the point, as we suppose—at any rate the *Globe* supposes, and that's all that matters—of sending a message to her father telling him that she will be released on payment of umpteen thousands. It is a very ordinary blackmail case, as I have presented it. There's no talk of marriage or of this man's sinister intentions, and certainly no hint that old man Bellamy is concerned in the affair."

Jim nodded.

Digitized by Google

"If I can arrange things, that is the way the inquest will run. The only danger is——"

"Lacy," finished Spike. "He's the boy that may spill the beans, especially as it seems to me very likely that you must charge him with being an accessory to the abduction, and therefore an accessory to the murder. Maybe he'll have something to say about you also, Featherstone," Spike went on significantly. "He told me a harrowing story of a beating he had had, and his immediate plans for getting his own back."

Lacy was the danger. Jim realised that, and when at the inquest the man's name was called and he did not answer, and on being sought could not be found, Jim was a very much relieved man, although the adjournment of the inquest for his attendance merely postponed the evil day. Since the man had not appeared on subpœna, Jim had only one course to take, and that was to arrest and hold him, and very unwillingly he handed to his assistant the necessary warrant for execution. But Lacy was not to be found. He had disappeared from the house in which he lived, vanished from the district of which he was so bright an ornament. Three days later the inquest was resumed, and Spike Holland watched the proceedings professionally, and was impressed by their amazing unreality. No word was spoken of Garre Castle; no reference made to the Green Archer (except by an inquisitive juryman, who was promptly snubbed by the coroner). It was a murder, bizarre in its character, otherwise prosaic, and when the stolid jury returned with their verdict they tore the last remnant of romance from the case. The verdict was:

"We find that the deceased Henry Arthur Smith was killed on board the steamship *La Contessa* within the area of Rotherhithe in the County of London, as a result of being stabbed with a sharp-pointed instrument by some person or persons unknown, against whom we return a verdict of Wilful Murder."

Digitized by Google

No reference to as much as an arrow; no word of Valerie Howett, who had given her evidence in a low voice which hardly reached the reporters' table.

"An ideal verdict," said Jim with a sigh of relief when it was all over. "I wonder what Bellamy thinks."

Mr. Howett asked him down to Lady's Manor for the week-end, an invitation that Jim was not slow to accept. Ordinarily reserved, Mr. Howett was now almost taciturn, Valerie told him a little while after he had arrived.

"The castle is now more closely guarded than ever," she said, "and Mr. Bellamy refuses to admit even the tradespeople. They leave their goods at the lodge. Mr. Savini has become a sort of major-domo, and his wife——"

"Fay?" said Jim incredulously. "You don't mean to say that she is here?"

"She came last Tuesday—she is a sort of lady housekeeper. Mr. Savini thinks that that dreadful man Lacy is hidden at the castle. I promised I wouldn't tell you that."

"Pretend that you haven't," said Jim hastily. "He is the one man whose whereabouts I do not want to know until I am ready to bring home to Abel Bellamy full responsibility for his many crimes."

They were in the garden, and she was absently smoothing the shaggy petals of a big white chrysanthemum.

"Do you think I must give up hope of finding my mother, Jim?" she asked.

He did not care to answer as directly.

"Hope, that kind of hope that is part of one's habit of thought and is years old, need never be given up," he said at last.

She wanted to tell him something, and had brought him into the dusky garden for the purpose. And yet every time she tried to bring herself to speak, she had stopped herself. It was not her secret; to tell, would be to rouse suspicion against one she loved very dearly. And yet, to reveal the thing that was in her thoughts night and day would be the surest method of relieving her troubled mind.

"Jim, I'm trying hard to confide in you, and I am just a

Digitized by Google

little frightened. It is about—about my father, Mr. Howett. Will you please forget that you are a police officer and remember only that you are my friend?"

He took her cold hand in his and she did not resist.

"Tell me, Valerie," he said gently. "I never felt less like a policeman!"

She sat down by his side on the broad wooden bench, and then, hesitatingly, she spoke of that strange experience of hers when she had heard the sound of voices and the weeping of a woman.

"When father told me that it was he who was in the drawing-room, I should have gone to bed—instead, my curiosity led me to look—and oh, Jim, I nearly died! There in the hall was the Green Archer!"

Jim was puzzled and not a little worried.

"When Mr. Howett came upstairs did you see him?"

She shook her head.

"He went straight to his room."

"Deliberately or hurriedly?"

"Hurriedly." She was reluctant to say the word.

"He didn't knock at your door or say good-night?"

"No; he went into his room and locked the door."

"And the woman—you did not see her?"

"No; Mr. Holland thought he saw her driving the car that passed him and woke him up."

Jim looked dubious.

"An hysterical woman would hardly drive a car; though women make extraordinary recoveries. It is a queer story——"

"I will tell you a queerer," she said, and told him for the first time of the mysterious sounds she had heard on the night of her escapade when she had found the green arrow in the kitchen.

At his urgent request she brought it down to the drawing-room, and he took it in his hand and measured it.

"This is a longer arrow than any of the three I have seen," he said at last. "Creager and Smith were killed by arrows that were at least six inches shorter. This is a real 'cloth yard' such as the ancient archers used."

Digitized by Google

He felt the needle-sharp point and examined it under a magnifying glass.

"Hand-fashioned," he said, "which accounts for our failure to trace purchases in the sports stores where arrows are made. The shaft is also home-made—it is beautifully finished."

He turned it over curiously and brought it under the light. "There are half a dozen finger-prints here," he said suddenly. "They are probably yours, but it will be worth while having them photographed. May I take the arrow to town with me?"

"No," she said with a vehemence which startled him for a moment, until he realised the reason. She was afraid—afraid that the finger-prints would reveal the identity of the Green Archer.

He handed the arrow back to her as the door opened to admit Mr. Howett.

"My dear——" he began, and stopped. "What is that?" he asked sternly.

"An arrow, father," Valerie faltered.

Mr. Howett took the weapon from her hand and, turning without a word, walked quickly from the room.

The eyes of the two young people met, and in Valerie's was a look of pain that hurt Jim Featherstone to see.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LVI

The Tapping in the Night

The dogs of Garre had gone. One morning came a kennel man, leashed them, and took them away, and the household of Garre Castle breathed more freely. Abe Bellamy, meeting his secretary upon his return, briefly announced their departure.

"I sent them back," he said. "They were fool-dogs to allow themselves to be drugged. Savini, I want a woman here to look after things—I'll have no more butlers. I want somebody who can tell the servants their work. Will you bring your wife to Garre?"

Savini's first impulse was to refuse.

"My wife wouldn't accept a position of housekeeper," he said. "It means that she would be a sort of upper servant."

"Ask her," said the old man shortly.

Julius wrote, never dreaming that Fay would accept. To his surprise she answered his letter in person, bringing her luggage with her.

"I'm tired of living alone, anyway," she said. "And I'm crazy to see this ghost, Julius. I like castles—it's not so pretty as Holloway, but there's much more freedom."

Julius winced. There were moments when he did not like to remember that his wife had been an inmate of that fortress prison in Holloway Road.

He took her into the library to see Bellamy, who did not seem at all astonished by her prompt arrival. He was mild of manner, even polite, gave her the keys of the castle—and a warning.

"I've got a watchman who wanders around at night. You needn't worry if you hear noises. He sleeps most of the day and you won't see him."

When they had gone back to their own room, Fay had a few questions to ask about this midnight rambler.

Digitized by Google

"I don't know who he is," said Julius. "The old man told me the same. I guess it is some thug of his, gunning for the Green Archer."

When that evening he read an account of the inquest he knew.

"It's Lacy," he said emphatically, and the girl agreed.

That neither she nor her husband had been called as witnesses struck her as strange. Thinking over the matter that night when she was sitting on the edge of her bed, smoking her last cigarette, she came to a conclusion.

"Featherstone has toned everything down and suppressed every scrap of evidence to keep Bellamy's name out of the case," she said.

"Why?" asked the astounded Julius. "That's the last thing Featherstone would do. He wants to get Bellamy."

She shook her head.

"You're clever, Julius, but you'll never represent your country abroad. Diplomacy isn't your long suit. Suppose Featherstone had held the old devil—where was the evidence against him? And how could he bring him into court without splashing Valerie Howett's big story? I am as sure as I'm sitting here, that there is a big story about her and that Bellamy is in it. Otherwise, why should she pay you to give her information about him?"

She slipped into bed and sat, clasping her knees, her brow wrinkled in thought.

"I have been thinking things over, Julius. Why did he want me down here?"

"Heaven knows: possibly he had a pull on me if you were around."

She did not answer. He was half asleep when she spoke again.

"Perhaps Holloway would be safer," she said, and Julius grunted.

Fay did not sleep well on this, the first night of her stay in Garre Castle. She was as wide awake at three as she had been at midnight. Once she heard somebody walking past the door, a stealthy, shuffling somebody who had a cough which he tried to suppress.

Digitized by Google

She got up at last and, pulling on her dressing-gown, went to the window and, pulling aside the curtain, stared out into the black night. Rain was falling; she had heard the brushing sound of it as it struck the panes. She could see nothing. She could imagine much. With a shiver she went back to bed.

She was dozing when she heard a faint and regular tapping. At first she thought the tapping was inside the room, but listening, she realised that it came from below.

"Tap, tap, tap," and then a pause. "Tap, tap, tap," this time continuously.

She nudged Julius and he woke.

"What is that noise?" she whispered.

He sat up in bed and listened.

"I don't know. Sounds like somebody downstairs."

"What is under us?" she asked.

Julius thought for a while.

"The dining-room—no, the guard-hall. I showed you the place the first day you came."

He felt her shudder.

"The entrance to the dungeons!" she whispered fearfully. "Oh, Julius, I'm frightened."

He patted her shoulder.

"Don't be silly. Perhaps it is the water-pipe—Bellamy always accounts for anything unusual that way."

Nevertheless he was puzzled by the sound.

"It can't be in the guard-room. It sounds like a hammer on steel, and we should hear it more distinctly."

"Then where is it?" she asked fretfully.

Julius Savini had certain senses abnormally developed. During his somewhat chequered career his keenness of hearing and his ability to locate sound had proved invaluable to him. And he had instantly located the tapping. It came from the dungeon, that place of gloom.

"Where is it?" asked the girl.

"It's the water-pipe," replied Julius. "You go to sleep and I will see if I can stop it."

He pulled on a coat and she heard him opening the drawer of the bureau.

Digitized by Google

"You don't want a gun to stop a water-pipe knocking, do you?" she asked almost tearfully.

"I'm naturally a nervous man," was the calm reply. "I'm not going to wander around this old castle——"

But she was out of bed and he heard the swish of her silk dressing-gown as she pulled it on.

"I'm not going to be left here alone," she said with determination.

Julius was not displeased, for he was no more anxious to be alone than she.

One light burnt in the corridor as they went softly along. Bellamy's door was open.

"He hasn't gone to bed," whispered Julius. "His door was in exactly that position when I came up."

In proof, there was a light in the hall below, and Julius went down the staircase very slowly. The library door was closed, and now he could hear the tapping more clearly. It came from the direction of the dining-room. Followed by Fay, he went along the dark passages, past the dining-room door and into the square stone guard-room. Before he reached there, he saw the reflected beams of the lantern which was on the stone floor. There was the gleam of another light at the foot of the dungeon stairs. Creeping forward, he peered down. There was nobody in sight, but the noise of steady hammering was louder.

The gun in his hand trembled as he put his foot on the first of the worn stone steps. Suddenly the hammering ceased, and the sound of feet on the uneven floor of the dungeon sent Savini swiftly into retreat. Gripping his wife by the arm, he flew along the passage and up the staircase. From the upper landing he had a clear and uninterrupted view of the hall. They had to wait some time before the workman appeared. It was Abel Bellamy.

He was coatless. His shirt opened to show his big chest, his shirt sleeves rolled up to the shoulder. Looking at those huge and muscular arms, Julius saw that they were streaked with grey dust. Bellamy carried a big hammer in one hand, a lantern in the other, and as he came into the hall, he raised his arm to wipe his streaming forehead. Savini

Digitized by Google

drew back and went swiftly down the corridor into his room and closed the door softly.

"What has he been doing?" whispered the frightened girl.

"Fixing the water-pipe," said Julius facetiously, and never dreamt how near he was to the truth.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LVII

The Trap

Early that morning Julius was astir. There was ample excuse for going into the guard-room, for his duties now brought him to every part of the castle building. The guard-room held a surprise. There was a hinged grating, a heavy steel grille which had been put there to close the entrance of the dungeons, but which, in Bellamy's time, had never been used. Now it was down and fastened by a brand-new padlock. When he saw Bellamy later he remarked upon this.

"Yes—one of those fools of servants nearly fell down the stairs when you were away," he said. "I've had it fixed so that there can be no accidents. Why?"

"I thought I'd like to show Mrs. Savini the dungeons," said Julius.

"Well, you can't," was the uncompromising reply.

When they came into contact again during the day, the old man raised the question himself.

"If your wife wants to see the dungeons, I'll show her over them myself some day," he said, and Julius thanked him and reported the conversation to Fay.

"I don't want to see his old dungeons," she said at once. "Julius, I'm leaving. The Maida Vale flat isn't a palace, but it's less creepy."

Julius accepted her decision without comment. Not so the old man when he heard the news.

"Tell her she can't go," he stormed. "I want her here. She's got to stay for a week at any rate."

"You had better tell her yourself, Mr. Bellamy," said the wise Julius.

"Send her in."

Fay came, more than a little antagonistic.

"Savini says you want to leave the castle."

Digitized by Google

"And Savini's right," she said. "This place gets on my nerves, Mr. Bellamy."

"Scared of ghosts?" he sneered.

"No, I'm scared of you."

Abe Bellamy chuckled. If she had racked her brains to think of something to please him, she could not have found better way.

"Afraid of me—what is there to be afraid of? Ugly men don't frighten women—they like 'em."

"Cavemen have never been fashionable with me," said Fay; "and it isn't your homely appearance that's made my own house attractive. You're no matinée idol and that's the truth, Mr. Bellamy, but you don't worry me. It's this creepy old castle and the noises at night——"

"What noises?" he asked quickly.

"Julius says it's the water-pipes, and perhaps he's right, but I can't sleep and I'm losing a whole lot of beauty that I can't afford."

He was watching her through half-closed eyes, and when she had finished, he laughed again, a soundless laugh, as if he was struggling to master his mirth.

"Have your own way," he said. "Stay until the end of next week and then you can go."

Her mind had been made up to leave at once, but she agreed.

"And why I said 'yes' I don't know. Another week in this place is going to turn me grey, Julius."

"You're a fool," said Julius.

That night they both heard the tapping, but it did not keep them from sleeping. On the third night Julius woke with a start, to find his wife also awake.

"What was that?" he asked.

"It sounded like an explosion." Even as she spoke there came a muffled roar that made the floor shiver.

Savini rushed into the passage and down the stairs. He was halfway across the hall when the old man appeared.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

Savini could smell something: the acrid fumes of a spent explosive.

Digitized by Google

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing; I was doing a little blasting. There's nothing to be afraid of."

"Blasting—at this hour of the night?"

"Couldn't be a better time, eh?" said Bellamy. "One of the walls in the dungeon looked like as though it was hiding something. All these old castles have treasure-rooms, and I've been thinking for a long time of breaking it down."

Abel Bellamy was not the kind of man to go treasure-hunting at three o'clock in the morning.

"Frightened your wife? I thought I was the only thing that scared her! Go back to bed, Savini."

There was no other course for Julius to follow.

"The old man has been blowing holes in the wall," he told her.

"If he has blown a hole big enough for me to crawl through I'm crawling," replied Fay with determination. "And you're coming too, Julius—I don't care how easy the money is, you're leaving! Why did he have you back—why did he ask me down? Because we're two of the people who could talk. I knew that he was behind Smith—didn't he send you to give instructions to me? Smith said as much. He couldn't afford to leave you in town or me either. I've been blind. He hates to see women around, and yet he sends for me! If I'd had the brain of a gnat I should have seen it before. We leave as soon as it is light."

Julius had an uneasy feeling that she was right, and said as much.

"Of course I'm right!" she said scornfully. "Julius Savini, you're a dead man if you stay here! That old fox is starting something. It isn't the blowing up of walls that worries me—I guess there isn't enough dynamite in stock to blow up Garre Castle. It's the plan behind all these tappings and bangings."

Bellamy was in the library when they presented themselves, and he looked up over the day-old copy of the *Globe* which gave an account of the inquest.

"Going out?" he asked, seeing their attire.

"Going home," Fay answered.

Digitized by Google

He put down the paper.

"Thought you were seeing out the week. You too, Savini?"

Julius nodded.

"Well . . . I think you're foolish, but I won't quarrel with you. Here are your wages. You're not entitled to any, leaving me in this way. Write out two receipts."

Julius obeyed, sitting for the last time at Abe Bellamy's writing-table.

"Savini, remember that leather folder? Don't ask me which. Remember the way you used to sneak round when I was out, trying first this drawer and then that? Remember all the information you used to give Valerie What-is-her-name? I'm going to return good for evil."

Julius, on his guard, watched, as with a thrust the old man pushed back the table and kicked the rug aside.

"I'm beaten," said Bellamy calmly, "beaten to blazes; that fly cop Featherstone knows all about the woman I've got down here, and I guess you know too, or you wouldn't be running away."

He stooped, lifted the parquet block with his finger-nails, and inserted the key. The Savini's watched, fascinated, as the stone slab swung back. Without a word Bellamy went down the steps.

"Come and see," he said, and Julius followed, and then, reluctantly, Fay.

The old man lit the gas bracket and unlocked the door. The lamps were burning as he had left them.

"Come in," said Bellamy at the entrance to the tunnel.

"I'll stay here," said Julius.

He felt Fay's hand on his arm, and it was trembling. Bellamy turned carelessly away.

"Well, stay—the woman is there if you want to see her."

Suddenly one hand fell on Savini's shoulder and the other on the girl. Before Julius could recover his balance he was flung into the tunnel and his wife thrust after him. The door closed with a crash and they heard the shooting of the bolts. Then Abe Bellamy's face appeared at a little grating in the door.

Digitized by Google

"Going home, are ye? By God, ye're home! Your last home, you crawling nigger—your last home, ye gutter woman! Leaving to carry tales, were ye? There ye are and there ye'll stay till ye die!"

Abe Bellamy's voice was a hoarse squeak; he had lashed himself to a fury that was near to madness.

"I've waited for you, Savini! And that wife of yours——" he began, and leapt aside only just in time.

A bullet came "smack!" against the wall behind him, a second struck one of the iron cross-pieces of the grating. The possibility of Julius being armed had not occurred to him.

Swiftly he dropped the iron shutter which covered the grating and, clamping it into place, went upstairs and replaced the trap. Then he wrote a long letter and carried it with his own hand to the keeper's lodge.

"You ride a bicycle, don't you? Take this to Lady's Manor."

The man rode off and Abe waited by the gate. Ten minutes brought the lodge-keeper back, and almost immediately afterwards the old man saw a familiar figure emerge from the Blue Boar.

"Go, tell that gentleman I want him," he said, and the interested Spike returned with the keeper.

"Good-morning, Holland. That friend of yours has left me."

"Savini, Mr. Bellamy?"

Abe nodded.

"Just gone—he and his wife. Caught them trying to open my safe in the night. Just fired them out. Thought you would like to have that for the *Globe*."

"Great," said Spike without enthusiasm. "Which way did they go? They didn't pass the Boar?"

"No; they walked to Newbury—that was what Savini said he was doing. He talked of seeing a lawyer there. I'm through with the castle, Holland. You can't trust these English people, and Savini's half English."

"What are you doing about it?"

"I'm firing the whole crowd. Paying them off and shut-

Digitized by Google

ting up the place," said Bellamy. "Just keeping on this lodge man and a caretaker. Maybe if you come up some day this week I'll give you a good story."

Spike's eyes twinkled.

"What are you going to do with the Green Archer?" he asked.

"He's the new caretaker," was the prompt reply. "Perhaps I'll be able to tell you something about the Green Archer, too, Holland. He's fooled everybody but me. Never seen his face, have you?"

"No," said Spike quietly. "It isn't his face that I want to see—it is his back."

Abe's brows met.

"His back?"

"I want to see the marks that Creager made when he flogged him," said Spike.

He was unprepared for the effect his words had upon the old man. Bellamy staggered as if he had been shot, and his huge hand went out to the stone pillar of the gate for support. His face was bloodless, and the pale eyes grew suddenly luminous.

"You want to see his back . . . that Creager flogged! . . ." he muttered—and then, turning on his heel, he ran up the drive as though a veritable spectre was pursuing him.

Straight to the library he ran, slammed and locked the door, and, tottering to his favourite chair, dropped into it exhausted.

The man Creager flogged! A ghost had risen in Garre more fearful than the Green Archer. For two hours he sat, staring blankly from the window, and in his heart was a strange and baffling emotion. It was the fear of death.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LVIII

A Visitor from Belgium

Jim Featherstone was in the garden when Valerie brought a letter which she handed to him without a word.

"Dear Miss Howett,

"When you came to the castle you asked me about your mother, and I told you that I knew nothing. At that time there were reasons why I could not tell you. Your mother is alive and, I believe, well. If you will do me the honour of calling on me one day I will give you all the information possible. May I say how much I regret the unpleasant experience you have passed through? I read about it for the first time this morning.

"Sincerely,
"Abel Bellamy."

Jim read it over again.

"A modern version of the spider and the fly," he said, "and of course you'll do nothing so rash as to walk into his parlour."

"I wondered if you would say that. And yet——"

"There may be something to it? I agree. It is possible that Abe Bellamy is clearing himself by a pretence of frankness."

"What danger would there be?" she asked, but Jim was adamantine on the point.

"As a friend I can only beg you not to go; as a police officer I forbid you!" he said, half jestingly. "Abe wouldn't try any tricks in broad daylight, but—here's Spike Holland at a run. What does he want?"

Spike came flying across the garden, his freckled face shining.

"Savini and his wife have left the castle, and the old man is firing his staff," he said breathlessly. "Only—the Savinis

Digitized by Google

haven't left the castle! I'd been watching the gate since early morning, because Julius had promised me that he would have a story for me. At ten there arrives Abe Bellamy with a story that Savini and his wife have been fired for tampering with his safe, and that they have 'just this minute gone.'"

"What do you suggest?"

"That Bellamy's lying. Savini is still there, and he and his wife are either assisting the old man in this fake firing, or else——"

"Well?"

"Or else Julius is a prisoner with his wife. I'm not going to be surprised at anything that happens at Garre."

Jim intended returning to town that day. Instead he called up his office and set inquiries on foot concerning Julius Savini. When in the afternoon the office reported that neither Julius nor his wife had been seen, he sent a local policeman to make inquiries at the Castle. The man returned with the intelligence that all the servants but the lodgekeeper and Sen the chauffeur had left that afternoon. They were mostly London people, and had gone away by the noon train. Abe had treated them generously. He knew nothing about Savini except that he had gone with his wife.

That was all the information he could give.

"Who answered the door to you?"

"Mr. Bellamy himself, sir. After I left him I heard him bolt and bar it."

There was nothing to be done but to wait.

But Abe Bellamy could not wait. Only one obstacle stood between him and the complete fulfilment of his plan, and that was providentially removed when he went to the store-room to look for milk for his coffee.

Above the library at Garre Castle were a number of rooms, more than half of them windowless, where in olden times the squires of the de Curcy's had their apartments. They were used now as lumber-rooms, or were not used at all. In one of these there slept by day a dark-visaged and not ill-looking man whose presence at Garre Julius had suspected.

Digitized by Google

Lacy was a professional thief, who described himself as a painter, because of all the jobs in prison painting is the easiest, and men are usually employed by prison authorities in the trades that they followed when they were free.

Ordinarily a man whose manners were beyond reproach, he had, since his arrival at Garre, assumed an air of equality which the old man had passed without comment and apparently without notice.

The last of the servants had hardly passed out of sight before Lacy opened the library door without knocking and swaggered into his patron's presence, one of Bellamy's cigars between his teeth. The illusion of success had spoilt better men than Lacy.

"All gone, boss? I suppose I shall have to do what I can for you, but don't expect me to be a servant, because I won't."

"I haven't asked you, have I?" growled Bellamy.

Mr. Lacy took out his cigar and eyed it without favour.

"This ain't one of your best, Abe," he said reproachfully. "You wouldn't have dreamt of giving poor old Smithy a cigar like this. And now that I'm, so to speak, doing Smithy's work and holding down his job, I'm entitled to a little better treatment."

"There's a box on the table," said the old man. "What did you want, Lacy?"

"I thought I'd come in and have a talk," said the man, seating himself comfortably in Bellamy's favourite chair. "I haven't quite got your idea. Do you expect me to stay here forever?"

"You don't want to see Featherstone, do you?"

At the mention of that name a black cloud came over Lacy's face.

"I'll see him one of these days," he said between his teeth, "and I'll pay him something I owe him."

"Don't worry," said Abe Bellamy, "you'll see him." He frowned and added: "And you will pay him."

The man smoked on in gloomy contemplation, and Abe watched him with a speculative eye.

"What do you want me to do?" asked Lacy suddenly.

Digitized by Google

"Help Sen," said the other, and Mr. Lacy made a grimace.

"I've never worked with a Chink in my life," he said, "and it doesn't sound good to me to start now."

Lacy was in his most offensive mood, and ordinarily Bellamy would have made short work of him, but now he received the grumbling of the man with a surprising meekness.

"When did Julius go?" asked Lacy suddenly.

Bellamy had seated himself at his desk and was slowly examining a number of accounts which Julius had left for settlement. He did not seem to hear the inquiry, and it was repeated.

"This morning," he answered.

Lacy smoked in silence, and was evidently turning the matter over in his mind, for after a while he said:

"I think you were a fool to let Julius go. He is the sort of fellow who'll be blackmailing you before you know where you are! That is the one thing about this business that has been puzzling me—the risks you've taken. There's Julius and Mrs. Julius and me, all in your secret. Suppose one of us turned policeman? It'd be rather troublesome to you, wouldn't it?"

"No," replied Bellamy. "I'm not worried about Julius, and I'm certainly not worried about you."

On his table were two telephones, one of which was a private line communicating with the lodge gates. The characteristic buzz of this latter instrument interrupted Lacy's rejoinder.

"There's a gentleman at the lodge gate who wants to see you, sir," said the porter's voice.

"Tell him I can't see anybody," answered Bellamy gruffly. "Who is he?"

"He says he's come down to see if the castle is for sale."

"It is not for sale, you boob!" roared Abe, and was about to put down the receiver when he thought to ask again: "Who is the man?"

"Mr. John Wood. He says he's come specially from Belgium to see you."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LIX

VALERIE MEETS JOHN WOOD

BELLAMY'S face changed.

"Tell him to come up," he said. He replaced the instrument and looked round at Lacy. "You can get out," he said. "A gentleman is coming to see me."

Lacy got up reluctantly.

"I'm tired of this business," he said. "I've been hiding and sleeping in dark corners ever since I've been here, and I'm fed up!"

Bellamy made no reply, only his pale eyes surveyed his uncouth guest dispassionately. Lacy went out of the room with a feeling of uneasiness for which he could not account.

It was Sen who opened the door to the visitor and showed him into the library. Bellamy was standing with his back to the fireplace, his hands behind him, his head on one side, a peculiar attitude of his, and he did not speak a word until Sen had gone and the visitor stood before him, hat in hand.

"Mr. Wood?" he growled.

"That is my name. You're Mr. Bellamy? I heard a rumour that you were leaving the castle and that it was for sale."

"Sit down," interrupted the old man.

"I'd rather stand, if you don't mind," was the reply.

"So you've heard the castle is for sale, have you? Well, whoever told you that was fooling you. I've no intention of selling this place now or at any future time. Why do you want to buy it?"

"I have been entrusted with a large sum of money to found a children's home in England," said Mr. Wood, his grave eyes never leaving the old man's face, "and it struck me that the castle, with a few modern improvements, might

Digitized by Google

make an ideal place. It has enormous room space, which, I understand, is never used by you; and apart from that the estate would allow us to build——"

"It is not for sale," said Abe Bellamy.

John Wood inclined his head and was turning to leave when a word from the old man checked him.

"I seem to know your name, Mr. Wood. Maybe I am mistaken, but I seem to remember that you knew a—relation of mine."

"Are you referring to your nephew?" asked John Wood quietly, and Bellamy nodded. "Yes, we were in the same squadron," said Wood.

"He was killed, eh? You're sure he was killed?"

"It was officially notified," said Wood; "and I inherited what little property he had."

"No chance of his being alive, eh?" asked Bellamy. "A lot of these men reported dead turn up alive."

"The American Army authorities were very particular; they took great care to verify all the reported deaths," said Wood, "and I believe the German Government confirmed his death."

The old man was thinking.

"Was he a talkative man, this nephew of mine? Did he ever tell you anything about——"—he was at a loss for a phrase—"about his own past?"

"He never spoke about his past," said John Wood.

"H'm!" said Bellamy, and seemed relieved.

He walked with his visitor to the door and watched him as he went down the drive and disappeared round the corner of the bushes toward the lodge gate. Then he came back to the library. He found Sen arranging a tray on the table, and the man handed him a slip of paper.

"No milk," it said.

"Is there none in the store-room?"

Sen shook his head.

"There are tins of canned milk there," growled Bellamy. "I'll go look for it myself."

It was when he was engaged in this search that he made his remarkable discovery.

Digitized by Google

That evening, when dusk fell, he sent Lacy in the car to London with instructions to make certain purchases.

* * * * *

Jim Featherstone was walking through the main street of Garre when he saw a man turn out of the gates of the castle and walk away. He had only one glance at the face, but he recognised him instantly, and, with an excuse to the girl who was with him, he quickened his pace and overtook John Wood as he was on the point of stepping into the old-fashioned jinty that plied between Garre and the railway.

"I came to buy the castle," said Wood after the first greetings were over, and Jim was amused.

"I had no idea that you were really serious. Miss Howett, I want you to meet Mr. John Wood. He came to buy Garre Castle, and I gather he wasn't successful. What do you think of Bellamy at close quarters?"

"He's not very prepossessing," said the other with a faint smile.

To Valerie this strange man held more than ordinary interest. She told herself that it was his splendid hobby which fascinated her, but in reality she would have admitted that it was his remarkable personality, conveyed to her even before she had spoken a word to him, that produced so profound an impression.

"Are you going back to your babies, Mr. Wood?" she asked.

"Not yet. I have a lot of business to do in England before I can return. Are you interested in my eccentricity?" he asked, his eyes kindling.

"So much so that I should like to know all about it," she answered. "Won't you come back to lunch, Mr. Wood?"

He hesitated.

"Yes," he said at last, and then, realising his ungraciousness, he added a hasty apology.

As they passed the castle gates he turned his head toward the building.

"You're looking for our ogre?" she asked.

"I did not expect to see him," said John Wood. "Now if

Digitized by Google

I had that castle," he said suddenly, "I would have the American flag flying on every tower. But I guess Abel Bellamy is almost as deficient in patriotism as he is in humanity."

They talked, she and the man from Belgium, all the way back to Lady's Manor, and Jim felt that for the moment he was of no consequence, which in itself was an unpleasant sensation. At lunch it seemed almost that Valerie had known the stranger all her life, and when she did address a word to Jim it was to secure his support for something Wood had said.

This might have worried Captain Featherstone but for the curious attitude of Mr. Howett, who, throughout the earlier stages of the meal, maintained a dead silence and never once looked up from his plate. Mr. Howett was a man who was used to entertaining guests, a man of public reputation, admirably balanced, and one whom his worst enemy would not accuse of shyness. Yet he held himself aloof, and it was not until Spike, who had been summoned from the Blue Boar to meet his friend, had turned the conversation to archery that he spoke at all. And then it struck Jim that he was reciting a case for himself—answering the challenge which the reporter had flung down in the dining-room of the Carlton.

"It is a coincidence that I am interested in the sport, but it is the kind of coincidence that you meet every day. For example, you open a book and see a technical word which you have never seen or employed before in your life; you look it up in a dictionary, discover its meaning, and within twelve hours you have seen that word again somewhere else!

"When I was a young man, and my eyes were as strong as any of yours, I certainly was interested in archery. There used to be half a dozen boys in the little village where I lived, who formed ourselves into a Robin Hood band, which was broken up after a few windows had suffered a similar fate. In those days I was supposed to be the best archer in the band. Later, as a young man, I did attain to a measure of proficiency. When money came to

Digitized by Google

me I took up the sport again, joined a society which existed in Philadelphia, but found that my eyesight was an insuperable handicap. Fifteen years ago I went to Germany to consult an oculist, and came back through London, wearing the glasses he designed for me—these very glasses." He took them off and blinked at them. "It was with the idea of testing them that, seeing the advertisement of the open archery competition, I was induced to take up a bow again."

"It seems to me," smiled John Wood, "that the conversation is drifting to the Green Archer. Has he been seen of late? I do not read the English newspapers very often."

Thereafter the conversation became general. It was Valerie, by careful and tactful questioning, who discovered that Wood had a spare evening, and it was Valerie who shamelessly manœuvred Mr. Howett into asking him to come to dinner the next night. Jim went home a very thoughtful young man. He was too wise in the ways of the world to be sorry for himself or to give expression to the little twinge of jealousy which he undoubtedly had felt.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LX

The Hole in the Wall

Julius Savini was by nature a philosopher, and he accepted the situation with a calm which filled his wife with awe. For two days he had been a prisoner in one of the dungeons of Garre Castle, and for these two days and nights he had not seen his gaoler. There was no danger of starving, for the little larder was packed with canned food, including four unopened tins of bread biscuits. There was an ample supply of water; no attempt was made to turn off the gas.

One feature of the prison-house threw a light upon Abe Bellamy's midnight activities. A hole about four feet square had been blown through a wall, and the farther end had been covered by a square steel grating, which defied Savini's efforts to move. He had crawled into the aperture, to discover that he was looking into the dungeons which Abe Bellamy had shown to his visitors.

"That was the noise we heard, Fay," he said. "The old man has been working for weeks to break through, and he must have spent the rest of the night after I heard the explosion in fixing this grating."

"Can't you move it?" she asked anxiously.

He shook his head.

"It is cemented, and even if we could get through it would be impossible to force the grill at the head of the stairs."

"Are you sure it is the dungeon you know?"

He nodded.

"I can see the trap into the lower hole, and that has been cemented over. Why, I don't know, because Bellamy was very proud of his Little Ease. Fay, we're in a hole, my dear," he said quietly, "and though I've got a gun and eight live cartridges I don't think that we have any immedi-

Digitized by Google

ate prospect of using them. I was a fool to let the old man know I was armed. The best thing we can do is to go easy on the provisions. We ought to plan to make them last as long as possible."

He thought of attempting to shoot out the lock, but after an examination of the door he decided that the effort would be useless and might only have the effect of making the door impossible to open.

"Perhaps he's only trying to frighten us," he said, but Fay knew that his cheerfulness was assumed.

"We'll live as long as we can, anyway, Julius," she said, putting her arm in his. "And Featherstone is sure to guess what has happened."

"Featherstone guessed that the woman was hidden in the castle," said Julius tersely, "but he did not find her. And I don't blame him for that. I wonder how she escaped?"

This gave him an idea, and he began a minute and searching inspection of the walls, which occupied the greater part of the day.

"The whole place is honeycombed with secret passages," he said, "and there may be a way out, if we can only find it."

But in the end he gave up his search in despair and settled himself down to make the best of a hopeless position.

On the second day, Fay, who was going through the contents of a drawer which she had discovered in the writing-table, found a red-covered book, filled with entries in minute handwriting. Every page was black with writing, and the text even strayed to the back of the cover. It was a diary; she saw that at a glance.

"Julius," she called sharply, and Savini, who was testing the stone floor in his search for a way of escape, came across to her.

"It is the diary of the woman, Julius," she said in a hushed voice. "It would be worth hundreds of thousands if we could get out."

He took the book from her, and, sitting down under a gas-globe, read for an hour. It was a tremendous story which the diary told, and Julius missed not one word. Presently

Digitized by Google

he laid the book down and rose and stretched himself stiffly.

"Put that diary where we can find it, Fay," he said. "I don't think we shall ever get out of this place, but if we do we'll have a villa in Monte Carlo and a flat in Berkeley Square for the rest of our lives."

For the remainder of the day they read alternately one to the other, and Julius, who had a remarkable memory, made mental notes. It was ten o'clock by his watch when they went to bed, after replacing their find in the drawer where they had discovered it.

The system of ventilation was little short of marvellous. Even in the confined space of their sleeping-room the air was always pure. It came from a ventilating shaft which ran all round the walls near the vault of the roof, a fact which Julius had duly noted and placed to the credit of Bellamy.

"It must have taken him a long time to get this place ready," he said, lying in bed and staring up at the stone arch above him. "He did everything himself. The lodgekeeper told me that he was months in the castle before he hired any servants or furnished the place. Abe Bellamy is certainly clever. But then, he began life as a builder, and I expect it was easy for him, with his strength, to make the alterations without assistance."

Fay was sitting before the dressing-table, calmly manicuring her nails.

"Julius, do you know what I think?" she said.

"I'd like to know sometimes," replied Julius.

"I think we're only the first of the batch. That grating leading to the dungeon has been put there for a special purpose. He's out to catch somebody else. And I don't think we need worry about rationing the provisions, either."

"Why not?" asked Julius, startled.

"Because when the other prisoners arrive Bellamy is going to make a bargain basement of these old dungeons, and the cheapest articles will be the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Savini."

Savini shivered and sat up.

Digitized by Google

"What do you mean?" he asked huskily.

"I mean just what I say. He has trapped you and he's trapped me. Abe is getting ready for the grand finale, and it will be pretty easy now that Coldharbour Smith is dead. There's you and I and Lacy and Featherstone——"

"And Miss Howett," suggested Julius when she paused.

"I was thinking of her, but I don't see exactly what he's got against her. He certainly wanted to bring her to Garre, and perhaps he will."

Fay slept lightly; the slightest noise invariably awoke her. Julius felt somebody shaking him gently by the shoulder and a hand laid on his mouth.

"Don't make a noise," whispered Fay's voice, and the hand was removed.

"What is it?" he answered in the same tone.

"There's somebody outside," she said.

Julius felt for the gun under his pillow, and, slipping noiselessly out of bed, opened the door. He had left the six lights burning, but now they were all extinguished save one, and the dungeon was in gloom. He peeped out cautiously; there was nobody in sight. Yet somebody must have been there to have turned out the lights. From where he stood he could see the door through which he had been thrown, and even as he looked it closed and the soft clap of the lock came to his ears.

"Bellamy!" he said bitterly as he came back to the room. "If I'd only known! Why didn't you wake me sooner?"

"I only heard the noise just before I woke you," she said. "Are you sure it was Bellamy?"

He did not reply, but, catching hold of her arm, raised a warning finger. They listened, and there came to them the thud of the swing trap in the library.

"It was Bellamy all right," said Julius, and went out into the bigger room to discover the reason for this unexpected visitation.

He relit the gas, expecting to find that the old man had left a letter. But of letter there was no sign.

"Why did he come?" he asked.

Fay yawned and shook her head.

Digitized by Google

"Why does he do anything? What is the time, Julius?"

"Five o'clock. I don't feel tired enough to go back to bed, Fay. Make some tea."

Whilst she went into the "kitchen" he wandered about looking for some explanation of Bellamy's visit. The door, which he tried without hope, was locked.

"I'm glad to be awake," said Fay when she brought the tea. "That is where this prison differs from any other that I've ever been in."

She set down the cups on the table.

"I wanted to get back to the diary, anyway," she said, and pulled open the writing-table drawer.

He heard her exclamation, saw her open the second of the drawers and search quickly.

"What is it?"

"It's gone, Julius!" she gasped.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXI

The Rifles

Savini's jaw dropped.

"Are you sure?"

They pulled out both the drawers and turned the contents on one of the rugs.

"Are you certain you put it there?" he asked, and knew that the question was futile, because he had seen her put it away.

They looked at one another.

"That is why he came down! He probably remembered it in the night," said Fay.

Julius Savini cursed softly.

"I was a fool to leave it there," he said. "We should have realised that he would come and look for it. He must have known that it was here."

It must have been nine o'clock in the morning, and they were sitting disconsolately together on the big settee, Julius with his head in his hands, the girl making a pretence at reading, when they heard the trap that covered the grating thrown back, and Bellamy's voice hailed them.

Julius was on his feet in a second, his gun in his hand, and, slipping to the cover of a big pillar, he waited.

"You can put down your gun, Savini," said the old man's voice. "Put it on that table where I can see it. Then I'll talk to you. If you don't do as I tell you I won't."

Julius considered rapidly. There was nothing to be gained by antagonising the old man any further, and he put the pistol down on a small table which he thought the old man had indicated.

"Now come to the door. Don't be afraid. If I had wanted to shoot you I could have shot you through the grating as easy as I could talk to you."

Digitized by Google

"What is the idea, Mr. Bellamy?" asked Julius in an injured tone. "I don't see why you're keeping us here. Surely you could trust us?"

"Surely I couldn't," was the reply. "I've come to tell you that they're looking for you. I've had a fly cop interviewing me all morning. He said they found some papers in your flat which gave them the idea that you were going abroad. I guess they'll give up looking for you, Savini. Make much of the food you have; there's no more for you. You're here for everlasting! I've thrown away the key—thrown it down the well in the grounds, Savini."

"You're a liar," said Julius calmly. "You were in here last night to steal the diary."

Bellamy stared at him through the grating.

"Say that again," he said hoarsely.

"You were here last night to steal the diary."

"Which diary?"

"What is the good of fooling?" said Julius. "You came in at five this morning, and you're a lucky man that I didn't see you."

"Which diary?" said the man. "Did she leave a diary? I ought to have guessed that. Where is it?"

"I tell you it's gone," said Julius impatiently. "You came——"

"You fool! You scum!" howled Bellamy. "I have not been near you since I locked you in!"

It was some time before the old man recovered his self-possession.

"Tell me, Savini, and I'll treat you squarely. What was it? Was it the diary of a woman?"

"Who knows better than you?" said Julius, a reply which roused the old man to fury.

"I tell you I don't! I tell you I've never seen it—didn't know that it was here. What did the diary say?" he asked, dropping his voice, and Julius recited to him one passage, and the man fell back from the opening as if he had been shot. Presently he reappeared, and even in that imperfect light they saw his face was deathly pale.

"There was a chance for you, Savini," he said in a hollow

Digitized by Google

voice. "Just a chance for you. The other man might have taken your place, but now you know too much, Savini, you know too much!"

The trap had slammed before Julius could answer, and he turned to meet his wife's troubled eyes.

"What made you tell him about the diary?" she asked quietly, "when you saw that he knew nothing about it? You were mad, Julius."

Savini shrugged his thin shoulders.

"What does it matter?" he said. "I don't believe him when he said he intended taking us out. We're here for keeps, Fay." He put his arm around her and drew her face against his. "It isn't as bad as I thought it would be," he said, fondling her face. "I was always scared of death, and the idea of dying this way, like a rat in a hole, would have driven me mad. But I'm not scared any more, little girl."

She drew herself gently from him.

"Julius," she said, "if there's any dying to be done, Bellamy is the man that's going to do it! If somebody found a way into this place, then I guess we can find a way out."

Julius shook his head.

"The Green Archer came through the door, and only the Green Archer could have found his way," he said.

She could only wonder at his serenity. This was not the Julius she knew, not the hectoring, threatening Julius or the frightened cringing Julius she had seen in the old man's presence. Marriage with Fay had been a piquant episode. It meant no more than a *cachet* which she could proudly flaunt in the face of less fortunate women. There had been times when she had despised her husband, moments when she was ready to defy him, though the innate loyalty in her had reserved such proofs of antagonism for such times as they were alone.

"You are certainly a revelation to me, Mister Savini," she said affectionately.

"I'm a revelation to myself," he confessed. "We have to face facts. And the big fact is that the old man is getting

Digitized by Google

ready for a piece of devilry that will make plain, honest murder look like walking on the grass. I'd like to know why he bought the rifles."

"What do you mean?" she asked, startled.

"There's a case of 'em in Sanctuary Tower. I found them accident. Half a dozen sporting Mannlichers and two boxes of cartridges. They are in the room above where atherstone slept. I've an idea that we shall live to hear m—but not much longer."

"What does he want with a case of rifles?" she asked, and Julius spread his delicate hands in a gesture of orance.

"He's a dead shot; he told me so once." He shook his head. "I wish I hadn't told him about the diary," he said. "Maybe I've brought the rifles into use."

In the quiet of his favourite room Abe Bellamy sat down to face a situation which was fraught with danger to himself, though this was the least considerable circumstance of all. The tragedy for this ruthless man lay in the possibility that at this, the eleventh hour, when it seemed that Providence itself had placed in his hands the means of revenging himself upon the woman he hated, the fruit of achievement was to be snatched from his grasp. From the moment the grey woman had disappeared he had been on his guard. Whither she had gone, in what manner, he could not even guess. Only he knew that somewhere far away, or at his elbow, an influence was working against him with deadly certainty, an influence which was crystallised in the vague figure of the Green Archer. If he felt a thrill, it was in the knowledge that once again was Garre Castle a fortress held against the enemies of its lord. Let him once accomplish his design, and they might hammer at its oaken doors or scale its sheer walls, and he would die satisfied.

Sen came to him in the midst of his meditations and put a written request for orders before him. The old man waved him aside impatiently.

"I do not want to eat. I will tell you when I do. Sen, would you like to go back to China?"

Sen shook his head.

Digitized by Google

The old man brooded for a while, then rose and opened the safe behind the panelling, and, taking out a bundle of bank notes, he handed them to his chauffeur.

"There's a whole lot of money there; I haven't counted it," he said. "But if anything happens, Sen, you had better get back home."

The Chinaman's scanty eyebrows rose.

"You want to know what may happen? A whole lot," said Abe dourly. "And anyhow it hasn't been a habit of yours to ask questions all these years, and don't start now. I shall be sending you to London in a few days, and I shan't want you to come back. You had better pack your books and your writings, or whatever the junk is that amuses you, and take them with you."

Sen waited, writing-pad in hand, as if he was going to repeat his indiscretion, then, evidently thinking better of it, he bowed himself from the room.

The sands were running out. Abe Bellamy knew; something within him spoke clearly and beyond mistake. The day was near at hand when all that Garre Castle stood for, and all that hate and love meant, would be forgotten in the oblivion of death. If he could only find the grey lady! If only by some remarkable chance she came into his hands! There was not a detective agency in London that was not looking for her. All that money could buy in the shape of information was at his disposal. But she had disappeared as though the ground had opened and swallowed her. And yet the police had not come. That dude Featherstone—how glad he would be to stalk into the castle with one of his "warrants"!

The diary! What had she written? If Savini were to be believed she had written too much for Abe Bellamy's peace of mind—and Julius could not have invented that passage which he had recited so glibly.

He roused himself at last and went down to work in the dungeons, and Julius, hearing him, took his gun and crept to the entrance of the hole, only to find that the grating had been covered by a board, which hid all view of the workman. And workman Abe Bellamy was throughout that

Digitized by Google

day. They heard the constant clink of steel on stone, and once Fay heard a rumble of sound which at first alarmed her and then excited her curiosity. It was some while before the noise was explained. Abel Bellamy was singing as he worked, and the girl marvelled.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXII

The Cottage in the Wood

The Green Archer was of no public interest. Mr. Syme, the news editor, said this much, with uncompromising emphasis, and for once Spike could invent no new development.

"Besides which," said Syme's voice on the 'phone, "Bellamy wrote last week threatening a libel action. He says you're depreciating the value of the property."

"Rats!" scoffed Spike. "That ghost has put ten thousand dollars on to its value! Honestly, Mr. Syme, this story is worth waiting for."

"Come straight along and wait in the office," said the relentless Syme, "and fill in your time with a little honest work."

The telephone was publicly placed in the broad hall of the Blue Boar, and usually when Spike was telephoning the bar was full, which had certain advantages, since it was impossible for his voice to rise above the babble of conversation. Today the bar was empty except for a gnarled old farmer, who was drinking from a large pewter tankard.

The old man nodded in the friendly way of country people as Spike turned from the wall-instrument.

"Ghosts, eh? This part of the country is full of 'em. New one up by Cloister Wood, they tell me. One of my carters saw 'un and he's been ill ever since."

"Too bad," said Spike politely. The Green Archer was a legend of the countryside, and he had chased at least three unprofitable clues. "But everybody around here thinks he has seen the Green Archer."

The aged man chuckled huskily.

"This one's not green. And it's a woman. My carter saw her quite close. Dagbent him! He was that scairt——"

"Where is Cloister Wood?" asked Spike, thoroughly interested.

"It's a matter of six miles by road, but if you cross

Digitized by Google

Monks Field and keep straight along the Adderley Road you'll come to it. There's supposed to be a haunted cottage in the wood. Nobody seems to live there, and yet there's somebody always there."

"Poppa," said Spike, "I am intrigued."

The old man shook his head.

"No, I shouldn't say there was anything like that going on. What I can't make out about this cottage is the new car tracks I'm always seeing. Not Ford tracks, but heavy ones. Somebody goes to and fro on a big car."

"To the cottage? Has it been seen—the car, I mean?"

The old man signalled a negative.

"There a barn near the cottage on the same bit of land. I've seen the tracks of the wheel going straight there on wet mornings when the ground was soft."

"How long has this woman been seen?" asked Spike.

"I never heard about her till last Saturday—my carter saw her. It was early in the morning, and he was walking through the wood on his way to my farm. I've farmed Caddle Heath for fifty-five years, and my father before me. Well, this carter of mine, Tom by name, was walking along, thinking of nothing, when he sees this woman and nearly drops with fright. She was walking through the wood crying. Tom said that he knew she was a ghost, and he ran like a hare."

"Was this anywhere near the cottage?"

"Quite close. That's what made me mention the cottage. I thought afterwards that maybe she lived there."

Spike at the moment was ready to clutch at any straw to justify a continuance of his stay at Garre. He had spoken nothing but the truth when he had said that he sensed a *dénouement* to the drama of Abe Bellamy. In spite of the seeming normality of life in Garre Castle, he had a queer premonition of impending trouble. To leave a story which he had nursed and mothered would be little short of physical agony.

But the "straw" of the woman in the forest seemed to him an unsubstantial one. Nevertheless, he set off on a three-mile walk—it was less than three miles, he found, by the

Digitized by Google

short-cut which the old farmer had indicated—to Cloister Wood. It was a dull day, and the breath of winter was in the air. Walking in these circumstances was a pleasure, and Spike had reached the fringe of Cloister Wood before he realised the fact.

The wood was mostly enclosed property, though the owner had made very little effort to keep his boundaries in repair. It was possible, by stepping over one of the rotting fences, to stray from the narrow road which twisted through the trees into a wilderness of pines and shrubs.

The cottage was not visible from the road. It lay at the end of a cart-road, which struck off at right-angles from the main thoroughfare, but, following the minute directions which he had extracted from the farmer, Spike had no difficulty in finding his way.

Cart-road it was—no cart had passed in years—and the only visible evidence of wheels was the broad marks of motor-tyres, which, to Spike's practised eye, seemed to have been made recently. Presently he came in sight of the cottage—a one-storied, wooden building, overgrown with ivy. Near at hand he saw, through the trees, the barn. No smoke came from the chimneys of the house. The windows of one side, that nearest to the road, were shuttered, and the place had a lifeless and deserted appearance. He walked straight to the door and knocked. There was no answer, though he waited two or three minutes; and then he proceeded to make a reconnaissance of the little building. Passing round to the back, he found two windows unshuttered, and he looked into a very simply furnished bedroom. The bed was unmade and discovered, as though somebody had recently risen from it. What immediately attracted his attention were three pairs of women's shoes that stood by the side of the bed. Even from that distance he could see that they were new. On the floor were two large cardboard boxes, filled with fluffy white paper; presently he discovered other boxes of a similar character, piled away in a corner of the room. He continued his search, found the back door and rattled it, but, eliciting no reply, he returned to the bedroom window.

Digitized by Google

It took Spike a long time to make up his mind, but at last he tried the windows gingerly, and, not a little to his alarm, one was open. He pushed up the sash. Should he go in? It was burglary pure and simple, and he could think of no excuse which he could offer to the outraged proprietor if he suddenly came to face with him. But the sight of that row of shoes excited his curiosity, and, drawing a deep breath, he jumped up, clambered over the sill, and was in the room.

"Safety first," said Spike, and made a tour through the cottage before he returned to examine more closely the contents of the bedchamber.

Only two rooms were furnished—the bedroom through which he had passed, and a small room which contained nothing more than a table, a chair, and a number of clothes-hooks fastened to the wooden walls. On one of these pegs hung a heavy leather coat, lined with fleece. The table was innocent of cover, and was bare except for a pair of leather gauntlet gloves, old and worn

Spike went again into the passage and called.

"Is anybody here?" And his words echoed through the hollow spaces of the building.

"There's nobody here," said Spike aloud, and returned to the bedroom.

The bed was a narrow one and hard, but the sheets were of the softest cambric, and Spike guessed they were new. On the table near the bed stood a flask of brandy. two medicine bottles, and a hypodermic syringe in a small case. This he examined curiously. Like the sheets and the two camel-hair blankets which covered the bed, it was new. And brand-new also were the shoes. Their soles were white and unsoiled; they were from one of the most expensive shoemakers in the West End of London, and——

Then Spike made a remarkable discovery. The shoes were different sizes! Each pair was a half-size smaller than the other. He put them down and turned his attention again to the medicine bottles, two of which were half empty. They bore the label of a London chemist.

Turning back the bedclothes, he found a woman's dress.

Digitized by Google

It was a loose gown, made in one piece, and was grey of colour and very old. The elbows had worn out and had been neatly darned. The cuffs had also been recently patched, and he found a place on the under-hem of the skirt from where the silk had been cut to secure the necessary material.

Spike got out of the window and closed it; then he went to inspect the small barn which stood in the midst of trees some distance from the house. Here again he found the tracks of a car, leading direct to this unpretentious building. The doors of the barn were padlocked, but by pulling at the chain he secured a view of the interior through a crack between the doors.

So far as cars were concerned the place was empty, but stored along one side, were a row of petrol-tins, whilst standing against the wall were three spare wheels. From their size Spike was able to judge the dimensions of the car.

He walked back to Garre deep in thought. There was no reason on earth why the mysterious occupant of the wood cottage should not have expensive shoes, and, if it was her hobby, shoes of different size. Perhaps they had been sent down on approval; but surely she would know the size of her own feet?

The solution to that little mystery came to Spike suddenly. The somebody who had brought those shoes for the woman did not know what size she wanted, and had brought several pairs in order that she should be fitted. That was clear. And when that little puzzle had been solved there was nothing else to consider. There was a mystery about the tenants who were never seen, yet were always there; who owned a big car and lived in a five-hundred-dollar cottage. But it was not the kind of mystery which, being solved, would lead him nearer to the Green Archer.

Spike sighed. It certainly wasn't big enough a mystery to induce Mr. Syme to reconsider his recall.

He got back to his room after dark and went upstairs to change, and whilst he was dressing there was a knock at his door, and Jim Featherstone came in. Jim had left the

Digitized by Google

Howetts that morning and had had his baggage taken to the inn.

"You're dining with the Howetts, aren't you, Holland? I was wondering whether you'd carry my excuses? I am going back to London tonight to hunt up the Savinis."

"I tell you, Captain, the Savinis are in the castle," said Spike emphatically. "They never left that morning, I swear."

"It's possible they are," said Jim quietly. "But don't lose sight of the fact that Julius Savini, excellent fellow as he is, is crook. I must make sure. There may be other ways out of the castle."

"You didn't find them when you were buttling," insisted Spike. "I can tell you one thing, Captain Featherstone: there's a way out of Garre, and old man Syme has found it. I am leaving for town tomorrow, and hereafter the Green Archer means nothing in my young life. He's had all the publicity he'll ever get out of the *Globe*."

Jim nodded.

"I suppose they're tired of waiting for startling developments," he said.

"What's the hurry?" asked Spike, finishing the careful tying of his bow and looking round at Jim, who had seated himself on the bed. "You could go tomorrow; and I know that Mr. Howett is expecting you, because I met Miss Howett as I was coming through the village, and she reminded me that we were dining. Wood will be there too; he's coming from London."

"So I understand," said Jim, and something in his tone made the reporter eye him keenly.

"Police Chief and Great Philanthropist Rivals for Love of Millionaire's Daughter," thought Spike. He had a habit of thinking in headlines.

But it wasn't wholly his distaste for witnessing the triumph of this newcomer which caused Jim to make his decision. He was a busy man and the head of a great department, and he had recognised, with a feeling of dismay, that he had been systematically neglecting his work. He could have discovered this without assistance, but he

Digitized by Google

had had a letter from his chief that morning, which contained a hint that his absence from headquarters was causing inconvenience.

His car was at the door when Spike came down, and Jim was at the wheel, lighting his pipe.

"You can do me a good turn, Featherstone," said Spike, "if you'd ring up Syme and tell him it would be little short of a national calamity if I am taken away from Garre till this business is cleaned up."

"I will even lie for you," said Jim. "But I agree with you that the Garre mystery is no nearer to solution now than it was when you first came. You'll explain to Miss Valerie, won't you?"

Spike waited till he had gone, then went on to Lady's Manor. He found that John Wood had arrived an hour before, and he and the girl were seated side by side on the settee. She was listening in rapt silence to the exposition of his great scheme, and scarcely noticed Spike's arrival.

"Where is Captain Featherstone?" she asked.

"I bring his apologies; he's had to go to town," said Spike. "The increase of crime since he has been in the country has so alarmed the Commissioners that they've sent for him."

"Are you serious—I mean about his going to town?" she asked.

"Never more serious," said Spike. "The fact is he's worried about Julius Savini—thinks the old man's got him tied up in the castle. At least, I think so, and I have an idea he shares my view."

He saw her expression change, but in a few minutes she seemed to have forgotten the existence of Jim Featherstone, and when they sat down to dinner Spike thought he had never seen her so animated, so cheerful, or so beautiful. Mr. Howett was, as usual, a listener to rather than a participator in the conversation. Of late he had seemed to be wholly absorbed in some mental problem which called for his complete attention. This Valerie had noticed, and it had worried her. To Spike, Mr. Howett was a figure of supreme interest. His own theory about the Green Archer

Digitized by Google

had matured, and little by little he was piecing together corroboration of a theory which at first had seemed, even to him, fantastical.

Wood was staying the night at Lady's Manor, Spike learnt. There was no train back to town, and Valerie would not hear of his staying at the inn. Curiously enough, she had not protested against Jim Featherstone having his lodgings at the Blue Boar, a fact which Spike duly noted.

At nine o'clock Mr. Howett retired from the drawing-room, where they had gone. He seemed to fade out of the group, and had left before Spike noticed his absence. And then, as was inevitable, the conversation drifted to the Green Archer. It was John Wood who turned the talk to the strange visitor.

"Have you ever seen him, Miss Howett?" he asked, half jestingly.

She shivered.

"Yes, I've seen him."

"What?" asked the astonished Spike. "You never told me, Miss Howett! You've actually seen the Green Archer?"

"I don't want to talk about it," she said, "especially about one of my experiences. But I have seen him twice—once in the grounds of Garre Castle."

"What on earth were you doing in the grounds of Garre Castle?" asked the amazed Spike.

"I was looking for somebody," she said. "It was an act of the wildest folly, and had nearly ended horribly for me. I went into the park one night."

"You saw him? Where?" asked Spike eagerly.

In spite of her horror of the memory, the girl smiled.

"If you put this in your newspaper I'll never speak another word to you, Mr. Holland!" she said. "But if you promise to keep it a dead secret, I will show you just where I saw the archer. I was looking at the place today. I didn't know that it was visible from the grounds, but it is. It was on a little hill that you can see from the wall of Lady's Manor. There is a wood there—they call them coverts in this country—that runs on the inside of the castle wall." She got up suddenly. "I'll show you," she

Digitized by Google

said, "but"—she raised a warning finger at Spike—"you are never to tell, under any circumstances whatever, that I saw him. And he isn't a ghost."

They followed her out into the hall, into the kitchen, and through the garden door. The garden was in darkness, and she stopped.

"I don't think you'll be able to see," she said.

"There's quite light enough, once you get used to being out in the night," urged Spike. "If you show me the spot, perhaps I can do a little investigation. I could make a search tomorrow in daylight. I've just got to get that Green Archer proved, or my name is mud in the office of the *Daily Globe*," he said.

They found that Spike was a true prophet. In spite of the darkness, it was possible not only to pick up the dark bulk of the Castle, but she could clearly distinguish the wood when they had planted the ladder and she had mounted to the parapet of the wall. Spike followed and sat astride the damp masonry, straining his eyes in the darkness. John Wood was between the two, his elbows on the parapet.

"That is the castle," he said.

"And there is the wood." She pointed. "You can just see the outline of the little hill where I saw him. But it is very dark."

"There isn't much to see," admitted Spike. "Maybe in the morning you'll let me get through your garden——"

There was a scratch as Spike struck a match. For a second the light flickered, then burned brightly as he extended it over the edge of the wall. Then he saw something and heard the girl scream, and caught her as he dropped the match.

Standing not six feet from them, on the edge of a grass plot, and staring up with his white, shapeless face, was the Green Archer!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXIII

Bellamy Hears of the Grey Lady

John Wood was the first to recover from the shock. In two seconds he had dropped to the other side of the wall, and Spike heard the thud of his feet as he ran along the path. His own attention was completely occupied with the half-fainting girl.

"Did you see it? Did you see it?" she whispered.

She was trembling from head to foot, and he had almost to carry her down the ladder into the house.

"Did you see it?" she asked again.

"I certainly saw something," confessed Spike.

"Where is Mr. Wood?" she asked.

"He is chasing whatever it was," answered the reporter.

She closed her eyes as if to hide some horrid sight, and then:

"What did you see, Mr. Holland?"

"Well," said Spike, as though loath to admit the evidence of his senses, "it certainly looked green, and it might have been an archer. I hate to admit that it gave me a jar."

In a quarter of an hour Wood came back, a little out of breath.

"I had to climb the wall without assistance," he said, and the girl was penitent.

"I am so sorry. I should have put over the other ladder for you. How thoughtless of me!"

"It doesn't matter," said Wood, dusting his hands. He was smiling, as though enjoying a joke all to himself.

"Did you see him?"

"I caught a glimpse—just a glimpse—but I didn't reach him."

They looked at one another.

"Was it the Green Archer, Miss Howett?" asked Spike.

"Yes," she said, "I think there is no doubt. Where are you going, Mr. Holland?"

"I'm going along to see old man Bellamy," said Spike

Digitized by Google

determinedly. "And I'm going to have that ground searched and the Green Archer laid out for inspection, or the *Globe* will be short a perfectly good reporter."

He had to knock up the lodgekeeper, who had gone to bed. That unhappy man refused for a long time to telephone through to the castle. Eventually Spike persuaded him.

"Ask Holland to come to the 'phone," said Bellamy, and when the reporter had complied: "What is wrong, Holland?"

"I've seen your Green Archer in the grounds, Mr. Bellamy."

A pause, and then:

"Come right up," said Bellamy.

He was waiting for Spike at the dark entrance of the hall.

"What's this stuff you're giving me about Green Archers?" he said.

"I saw him," said Spike, "much more clearly than I can see you."

"Where was he, and where were you?"

"I was on the wall of Mr. Howett's house," said Spike. "Miss Howett was showing me how fine the castle looked by night."

"It must have been a wonderful sight," said the old man sarcastically, "all lit up! Maybe you were waiting for a firework show? Well, what did you see?"

"I tell you I saw the Green Archer; he was less than three yards from me."

"What did you have for dinner?" asked Abe Bellamy scornfully. "You're after a newspaper story, Holland. If you think I'm going to help you to invent ghost stories you're wrong. You might have saved yourself the trouble of coming up. There is a Green Archer," he said with unaccustomed good-humour, "but he's one of those dude ghosts who can't go outdoors without catching cold. He's an indoor ghost, and fresh air would kill him. No, Holland, you've got to find another stunt."

"Won't you search the grounds?"

"Search nothing," said Abe Bellamy impatiently. "What

Digitized by Google

servants have I got to search the grounds with? Perhaps you'll get your friend Featherstone to bring up his reserves."

He had been standing square in the doorway, and unexpectedly he turned.

"Come in," he said. "There's a question I want to ask you."

When the library door had closed on them he asked without preamble:

"What is the story you told me the other day about the man who was flogged by Creager? I was so wild with you that I couldn't stop to talk, but, thinking it over, perhaps you can tell me something about what you mean."

"I said that the man who killed Creager was one who had been flogged by him. Creager was a prison official, and it was his job to give the whip. That is one of the police theories, Mr. Bellamy, that Creager was killed by somebody who was waiting for Creager."

Bellamy pushed a box of cigars toward the visitor, and, taking one himself at random, bit off the end and lit it.

"That seems to be possible," he said. "I don't know very much about what happens in English gaols, but I seem to remember reading that Creager was a guard—warder they call them in this country. It is a mighty reasonable theory," he added as he puffed a ring of smoke into the air and watched it dissipate. "Have you any notion of your own as to who the Green Archer is?"

"Too many notions," said Spike briefly. "I find a new man every week. I started with you——"

"With me?" said the other, and guffawed loudly. "That certainly is amusing. Did you bring Julius Savini into it at all?"

Spike nodded.

"I brought everybody into it," he said, "and until tonight I was perfectly certain I knew."

"Who was it?" said the old man, watching him closely.

"I'm not prepared to libel a perfectly innocent man," said Spike. "Which reminds me, Mr. Bellamy, that you have been threatening my paper with an action."

"Don't get scared about that," said the old man. "I

Digitized by Google

wouldn't do anything to injure you, Holland. You're a good boy and a smart boy, and maybe I could put a lot of money in your way."

"Isn't that grand?" said the gratified Spike.

"And you needn't get fresh about it, either," growled the old man, with whom sustained affability was a really painful effort. "I give big money for big services, Holland, and you're the kind of smart boy who might make a fortune. Whose idea was it that Creager had been killed by somebody he had flogged—Featherstone's?"

"I tell you it is a police theory, Mr. Bellamy, and I guess Featherstone knows just what the police are thinking. Where is Savini? Have you heard from him?"

Bellamy shook his head.

"Why should I hear from him? I fired him for trying to rob me. It isn't likely we're sending one another loving messages every hour, is it? What's the police theory about Savini?"

"They think he's still in the castle," said Spike, and the old man laughed scornfully.

"What am I running—a convalescent home for crooks?" he asked contemptuously. "The sap-headed people round here would believe anything. They believe in the Green Archer."

"And the grey lady," added Spike, remembering his experience of that afternoon.

The silence that followed did not at first seem strange to him, because in Abe Bellamy's conversation there occurred an occasional hiatus. He could not see the old man's face; it was turned as though he was looking at the fire. But suddenly a strange thrill went down the reporter's spine. He did not understand why, thinking at first that the door was open and a cold draught of air had struck him. He even turned to look, but the door was shut. And then Abe Bellamy spoke, still averting his face.

"What grey lady is that, Holland?"

"She's a new one I discovered today," said Spike. "One of these hay-seeds has seen a woman wandering round the Cloister Woods, which are about three miles from here."

Digitized by Google

"I know them," said Bellamy, still speaking to the fire. "What of her?"

"There is something about farming that makes you green and keeps you green," said Spike reminiscently. "They thought she was a spook. She's probably a fresh-air crank."

"Grey, eh? Where does she live?"

"I am not certain," said Spike, "but I imagine she lives at a cottage in the wood. I took the trouble to investigate the story today, and I found the place. The house was empty, but somebody had been there this morning. As a matter of fact, Mr. Bellamy, I got into the house and had a look round."

Spike had a very special reason for wanting to stand well with Abe Bellamy at that moment, and there seemed no great harm in relating the story of his adventure that afternoon.

"New shoes, medicine, car tracks?" repeated Bellamy. "That's queer—mighty queer. And she was there this morning, you say?"

"I should think so," said Spike. "The wheel-marks were new, and the bed was evidently slept in last night."

"Perhaps she's what you say—one of those cranks who like to live near Nature."

Now he had turned his head. Spike wondered whether his imagination was playing tricks with him. It seemed that he had grown desperately old and even more repulsive.

"You're a good boy, Holland," he said slowly, "and if I offered you some money you'd throw me down. Maybe I could buy you a car. Fond of motoring?"

"Not so fond that I want a car," said Spike, and wondered what was the reason for this sudden outburst of generosity on the part of his host.

"You can go look in the grounds if you want, but I think you'll waste your time," said Bellamy. "Come in in the morning—the castle grounds are yours. I'll 'phone the lodge-keeper to let you in. But I think you'll find nothing. I tell you my ghost belongs to the hothouse and doesn't like wet weather."

Digitized by Google

When Spike had gone the old man rang for Sen.

"Get me a greatcoat," he said, "and then bring along the car. I may be out for a long time."

All that night Abe Bellamy waited in the streaming rain for the occupant of the cottage to return. He stood in the shadow beneath the unshuttered window, heedless of the gale that shrieked through the wood, or of the driving rain which stung his face. If the man had returned he would have troubled Abe Bellamy no more. But the dawn came without any sign of him, and the old man went back tc Garre with his hands unstained.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXIV

"Mr. Bellamy is Dead"

The grey woman! She had been in the neighbourhood all the time. She was there still, perhaps, in hiding, within the reach of his hand. It was she; he had recognised the dress by the description. The grey woman would never accept clothes from him, and although he had brought to her the most wonderful creations of a French modiste, she had kept to the silk grey gown she had worn the day she had arrived at the castle.

He did not go to bed that night, and in the morning, closing his library from interference, he passed down the secret stairs to the place of Savini's confinement. The door was opened, and the old man was in the room before Julius could reach for his pistol.

"Take your hand away," snarled the old man. "I want that gun of yours."

He slipped it from the pocket of his helpless prisoner and walked back and closed the door, locking it on the inside.

"I'm going to have a little talk with you, Savini," he said. "You told me somebody came into this place the other night and took away a book. Were you lying?"

"Why should I lie?" said Julius sullenly.

"Did you see who it was?"

"No, I only heard the sound of the door closing."

"This door?" The old man pointed to the one through which he had come, and Savini nodded.

Bellamy walked into the bedroom and pulled aside the curtains that hid the wardrobe. The grey woman's dresses were still there, as they had been in the days of her imprisonment, and he swept them off into his arms and came out.

"How long are you going to keep us here, Bellamy?" asked Fay. "It's getting just a trifle monotonous."

Digitized by Google

"You're with your husband, aren't you? That's as much as a good woman wants. And you're a good woman, according to all the records I've had of you."

"Don't let us stoop to personalities," said Fay. "You're not exactly a prominent churchman, but that's nothing to do with my question. How long are we going to be kept here?"

"You're going to be kept here whilst I want you to be here," said the old man; "and if it's company you're missing I'll fix that for you."

She did not answer, and he went toward the door, but he had hardly turned his back before she sprang at him like a wild cat. Her arms whipped round his neck and drew him back.

"Quick, Julius!" she gasped, but before Julius could reach him the old man had swung her round, as a dog might swing a rat, and had thrown her to the stone floor. He had not even troubled to draw his pistol. Bare-handed he towered over the little Eurasian, and Julius could have wept at the realisation of his impotence. Fay had got to her feet, white and shaken and undaunted, and there was something like admiration in the eyes of the old man.

"If your husband had had your pluck he would have been a man," he said.

"He's man enough for you," she said defiantly. "Give him his gun and take a chance, you gorilla!"

With a chuckle he continued his way to the door, and when she gripped his arm and tried to hold him he shook her off. When he got back to the library he took the dresses in his arms, and, summoning Sen, they went to a secluded part of the grounds near the garage, and, saturating the flimsy fabrics with petrol, they made a huge bonfire of the lot.

"That settles that," he said, and went down to the dungeons to continue his work.

All that afternoon Julius heard the clink of the steel, but did not move to discover what the old man was doing, guessing that Bellamy had been careful to cover up the end of the hole.

Digitized by Google

For the first time Julius gave way to despair. Deprived of his one weapon of defence, the hopelessness of his situation became more emphatic.

"It's no use, Fay," he said; "we've got to face the possibility of being here for years."

She shook her head.

"I should like to think so," she said. "But has it struck you what might happen if the old man died suddenly?"

He shuddered visibly.

"For God's sake don't get such grisly thoughts in your head!" he said irritably. "We should be starved to death here."

"Isn't it possible to break open the door?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"There's no furniture here heavy enough, and nothing else that you could use for a lever."

She bit her lip thoughtfully.

"I wish the old devil would come down again. I'd like a shower."

"A what?" asked her husband incredulously.

"A shower," said the calm girl. "It is a whim of mine."

Abe Bellamy was still at work in the dungeons, as the constant hammering reminded her. And suddenly she went to the hole and crawled in as far as the grating. Beyond that she could not see, for Bellamy had hung a sack before the grille.

"Bellamy!" she called, and after a while he heard her.

"What do you want?" he demanded, stopping his work.

"If you're going to keep us here, the least you can do is to make us comfortable," said Fay coolly when he pulled aside the sack and glared down at her, and his lips went up.

"You weren't so comfortable in prison, young woman," he said. "What do you want?"

"I want a shower," said the girl. "These plunge baths are fatal to a woman of my delicate constitution."

"A what!" he roared, and broke into a fit of laughter. Purple-faced, he stood shrieking with merriment, and she watched him in fear. Presently he recovered.

"Perhaps you'd like me to have a boudoir fitted for you

Digitized by Google

too?" he said. "You don't suppose that I'm coming in to fix a shower?"

"I don't want you to fix anything, and I don't want you to come in, because you've the manners of a hog," said Fay frankly. "What I do want is some rubber tubing to fix to the water-faucet."

He growled something and let the sacking drop, and half an hour later she heard him bellow her name, and went to find him pushing the end of a red rubber tube through the grating.

"If it's too long for you, you can cut it short," he said. "And if you think you're going to fill this with water and plug me when I come in, you've got another guess coming."

She hauled back the red length of rubber in triumph.

"What do you want it for?" asked Julius in a low voice, but she put her finger on her lips.

That evening, when all was quiet, she unscrewed the burner of one of the gas jets, and pulled an end of the tube over the pipe. The hose was too large, and she tore strips from the sheet and bound it tightly. Into the other end she put a piece of brass tubing she had taken from the burner, and this also necessitated tight and careful binding. Both ends they plastered with soap, and when it was completed Julius turned on the gas, and the girl applied a light to the burner end. A long flame shot out, and she brought it close to the door, above the lock. The tubing was just long enough, and in a second the woodwork began to smoke.

"Get a bucket of water," whispered Fay. "We shall have to put the fire out as soon as the door catches alight."

And so they worked throughout the evening. The underground room was filled with blue smoke and the pungent smell of burning wood, and at three o'clock in the morning Julius pulled at the door and the lock fell out.

They were exhausted, their faces black with smoke, their throats parched, their eyes aching painfully, and Fay went, gasping, into the room beneath the library, and leant against the wall, drawing in the air in long, exhausted sobs. There remained the trap under Bellamy's desk, and this was going to be a more difficult proposition. How difficult.

Digitized by Google

Julius could only guess, because he had not any clear memory of the trap's construction.

He went up the stairs after lighting the gas-bracket and made an examination. He looked and groaned.

"It's useless, Fay," he said. "The only thing we can do is to hide under the stairs until the old man comes down and then plug him."

"With what?" she asked.

"With the pipe. He gave you the idea."

Julius went back into the smoke-filled room, detached the hose from the gas-pipe, and cut off a length, which he twisted into two.

"It is not going to hurt him any more than a flea-bite," he said when he returned to his wife. "We must find some other way."

A search of the room revealed nothing in the shape of a weapon. Julius went up to the head of the stairs and again tried the slab, putting all his weight against that part where he knew the lock to be. Then a footstep sounded close to his ear, and instinctively he ducked. There came to him the faint tinkle of a bell, and then a voice he recognised sounded clearly.

"Is that Captain Featherstone? . . . Can you come at once to Garre Castle? Mr. Bellamy died at two o'clock this morning, and has left a written statement which he wishes you to see."

For a while Julius could not grasp the significance of the words. He came down to the girl, dazed with the horror of his position.

"What is the matter, Julius?" Fay gripped his arm and turned her anxious face to his.

"Nothing—it is nothing," he said hoarsely.

"You heard somebody speaking. What did they say?"

"It was—I don't know; I think it was Lacy."

"Lacy? At this hour of the morning! Who was he talking to?"

Julius swallowed something.

"He was talking to Featherstone. You'd better know, Fay. Bellamy is dead!"

Digitized by Google

Her mouth opened in an "Oh!" of amazement.

"Abe Bellamy dead?" she said incredulously. "Who was he telling?"

"He was talking to Featherstone. Bellamy has left a statement which he wants Featherstone to read."

She looked at him suspiciously.

"Bellamy dead!" she scoffed. "And Lacy telling Featherstone to come down, when Feathers is looking for him to gaol him! Do you think Lacy's that kind of simp? If there was any statement that the old man had made, it could have gone by post, couldn't it, or waited till Lacy was well out of the way? Bellamy being dead won't help Lacy. What do you think Featherstone is going to do? Do you suppose he's going to sob out his young heart on Lacy's shoulder and tell him that all the past is forgiven and we'll start afresh? Not so, Julius! Feathers may fall into it, because he's in love with that girl Howett, and naturally he isn't normal. But if he had his mind on his work, that fake would smell bad. Julius, you're a queer man; you're shivering like a jelly in an earthquake, and yet you'd tackle Bellamy without help! Let's go back to the room and talk; the smoke is clearing away."

So perfect was the system of ventilation that the atmosphere was almost clear when they returned.

"We're going to have company," nodded Fay. "Old man Bellamy was a true prophet."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXV

TRAPPED

JIM FEATHERSTONE dressed in a hurry and turned out into the chilly and deserted street before it occurred to him that there could be very little urgency in seeing the statement of the dead man. He had to find his car in the darkness, and was held up for a few minutes by a policeman who came from nowhere, and, suspecting a motor theft, was all for taking him to the station. Explanations were forthcoming, and within a quarter of an hour of receiving the call Jim was flying along the Embankment and through the desert of Chelsea.

Abe Bellamy dead! It did not seem possible. It was Lacy who had telephoned; Jim recognised his voice immediately, and it was the fact that this man, against whom a warrant had been issued, had taken the risk attendant upon calling him up that made him feel there must be something unusual at Garre Castle calling for his instant attention.

At half-past four he came down the hill into Garre and turned his car into the castle gates. He was evidently expected, for they were wide open, though he saw no sign of the lodgekeeper.

The door of the outer hall was also open, and the library door was ajar. He stepped in without hesitation, and instantly the door was slammed. Jim turned in a flash, but before he could put his hand in his pocket his arms were gripped with a power which only one man in the world could have exercised.

"Glad to meet you, Captain Featherstone," said a mocking voice in his ear. "You've come for the funeral, I guess? Well, there's going to be a funeral all right, but it isn't mine!"

The man's hand slipped down Jim's arm and found the weapon it had been seeking.

Digitized by Google

"You come at a pretty good time," said Abe. "I've always had a passion for time-tables. Made hundreds of thousands of dollars on contracts that way," said the old man pleasantly. "Now you'll come a little walk with me."

The man's strength was colossal. It was lunacy to fight against it. One blow from that huge fist, delivered whilst he was at a disadvantage, would cripple all chance of escape.

"This is your supreme outrage, Bellamy, and I don't think you'll commit another," he said quietly as he accompanied his captor along the passage past the dining-room to the stone hall leading to the dungeon.

"I think this is very nearly the last," agreed Bellamy; "and the fact that I've taken you ought to get out of your head any doubt that remains about my intentions. This is my last killing, and it's going to be a big one."

Jim did not see the grille as he was piloted down the stairs to the dungeon. In his mind he was satisfied that the old man was taking him to the lower level to that Little Ease where he wished his worst enemies to be confined. He was therefore agreeably surprised when, reaching the bottom of the steps, Bellamy released his arm.

"I'm going to keep you in the dark," he said.

He put down the lantern, which was burning in preparation for Jim's arrival.

"I went up to town the other day, Featherstone," he said. "You're well aware of it, because two of your men shadowed me all the time. Went to see my doctor. He says I've got thickening of the arteries and might die at any minute. That naturally interested me, because there are so many things I want to do before I get out. And one of the things was to put you just where I want you. That fellow Savini," he went on reminiscently, "was a hell of a good reader. He used to read me books by the hour. And one of the things he read was history. In the old days, when a great king went out they used to sacrifice a lot of his hired folk—sort of made his death a little easier for him to know that somebody else was going the same way. And that's just what's going to happen to me, Featherstone."

Digitized by Google

He took up the lantern and swung it rhythmically to and fro as though he were keeping time to an unheard tune that was passing through his mind.

"Yes, that's what's going to happen to you, boy," he said.

Half-way up the steps he turned and looked back.

"If you want anything"—he pointed to the wall—"you'll find Julius Savini in there. Just ring for him. Good-night."

He might have been bidding good-night to an honoured guest, so unemotional was he, and as he dropped the grille with a clang and snapped the big padlock about its bars there was a smile on his face which happily nobody saw, for it made Abel Bellamy just a little less attractive than usual.

He found Sen waiting in the hall.

"Take this man's car, Sen; drive it till you come to the bridge about three miles from here. There's a path running alongside. You've seen it?" Sen nodded. "Just let her run into the river. You'll have to walk back, but you can take your bicycle on the back of the car; it will make it easier."

He looked at his watch. It was nearly five.

"There's nearly two hours before daylight," he grunted with satisfaction, and went back to his room, where a man was waiting for him.

Featherstone heard the clang of the grille and guessed the means by which he was being held secure. His first act, when he was left alone, was to go carefully through all his pockets. He found his pipe and matches, but, with the exception of his penknife, he was unarmed. The dungeon was in complete darkness, a darkness which made it impossible for him to see even his hand before his face. The only light he had was the illuminated dial of his watch, and so intense was the blackness that the figures on the face appeared as though they were outlined in fire.

Groping forward, he reached one wall, and went cautiously along feeling his way. He expected at any moment to stumble over the sleeping form of Julius Savini, but he made a complete circuit of the dungeon without finding

Digitized by Google

his companion in misfortune. He had given up, and was feeling for a place to sit, when a voice almost under his feet whispered:

"Who's that?"

"Featherstone," said Jim. "Is that you, Savini?"

"That's me," said Savini's voice. "Fay is here."

"Where are you?" asked Jim.

"We're in Bellamy's dungeon de luxe," said Fay's voice. "Put your hand down; you will feel a grating."

Jim obeyed and suddenly touched a small hand, which he clasped.

"Poor old Fay!" he said softly. "So he has got you in the toils?"

"I don't know anything about the toils. I think it must be half-brother to the Tombs," said Fay. "This is worse than anything you could send me to, Featherstone." She lowered her voice. "He may be listening at the top of the stairs," she said.

"I don't think so," said Jim. "I heard him walk along the passage. Besides, he told me you were here somewhere. Where are you?"

"We're in the room where he kept the woman prisoner," said Fay. "The woman you were looking for—Mrs. Held."

"She's not there now?" asked Jim in surprise.

There was no answer, and he guessed that Fay had shaken her head.

"I presume there's somebody else coming? Is there nobody else but you and Fay? My God!" He suddenly remembered Valerie.

"You're thinking about Miss Howett, aren't you?" said Fay shrewdly. "But if I were you, I shouldn't. Feathers, have you got a knife?"

"I've got a small knife, yes, but it isn't much good," replied Jim in the same soft tone that she had employed.

"Feel along the grille," she urged in a whisper. "The cement may not have hardened."

He carried out her instructions, and, finding his knife, began to pick at the granite-hard surface that covered one of the bars.

Digitized by Google

"It's useless," he said. "I can do nothing. You've been here, of course, since the day you were supposed to have left the castle?"

"He told you that, did he?" said Julius. Then: "Listen, Captain. We've got the door of our place open, but we can't force the upper trap." In a few words he explained the mechanism of the door that led from Bellamy's library.

"I ought to have known it was there," said Jim bitterly. "In the old plan the library was called the Hall of Justice, and in all these old castles the Hall of Justice communicates directly with the dungeons, generally by a stone stairway. You see it almost anywhere—at Nuremburg, even in the Tower of London, in the Château de Chillon; in all these places there's a way up to the justice-hall. If I hadn't been the greatest lunatic that ever served in the police I should have had the floor up. I suppose you haven't a gun?" he asked.

"No, he relieved me of that."

"I never felt such a weakling before, Savini, as I did in his hands. Have you spoken to him?" he asked anxiously. "Did he say anything at all about Miss Howett, or give you an idea that he intended bringing her here? He will stop at nothing now. He burnt his boats when he got me here."

"The only chance, and it's a mighty small one, is that the old man has left some tools behind in your apartment," said Julius, and Jim smiled to himself at the quaint description of his stone prison. "Wait, I'll give you a light. We covered up the entrance because we were afraid the old man would see us."

Fay pulled back the blanket which hid the farther end of the little tunnel, and instantly the dungeon was sufficiently well lighted for Jim to see every corner. Fay disappeared to heat some coffee, and, returning, pushed a steaming cup through the iron bars.

"How did you get the door open?" asked Jim, and they told him of Fay's scheme.

"I thought of trying it on the bars, but I guess we should want a lever of some kind, and that we haven't got," said Julius regretfully. "When it's light you might go to the

Digitized by Google

top of the stairs and see if you can shift the grille, Featherstone."

"I can't understand why he blew this hole in the wall. It wasn't with the idea of promoting conversation," interrupted Fay. "That you can bet your life on! Bellamy isn't that kind. If it wasn't for that grating I wouldn't feel scared. But every time I look at those bars I just go cold inside."

Daylight came at last. Jim at least had a view of the blessed sun—a streak of golden light that lay across the rusty bars that blocked the entrance to the stairs. As soon as there was light enough he climbed to the top, and, putting his hand through the grille, reached for the padlock. He knew the moment he touched it that there was no hope of escaping that way. The keyhole was one of a peculiar pattern; none of the keys he had in his pocket would fit. This was so obvious that he did not try. By screwing his head he could see that the door of the passage was fastened, and he remembered that it was a particularly thick door, and that, even if he could make his voice heard, there were no servants in the castle to whom he could appeal.

He saw for the first time the elbow of a thick pipe that protruded from the wall of the guard-room and turned under the floor. Going back to the grating, he asked what was its significance.

"There are two of them," said Julius. "The old man was going to have a swimming-pool in the close, and had the water put on; it cost him thousands before he decided he wouldn't. There's one in each corner. I don't think you could see the other."

It was then that Jim Featherstone understood the meaning of the grille between the dungeons.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXVI

The Siege

The Howetts were at breakfast when Spike Holland arrived with the news, and the girl saw, from a glance at his face, that something serious had happened.

"Did Featherstone come here last night?" he asked quickly.

"No," said the girl in alarm. "Why?"

"I've just been on the 'phone to Jackson—he's Featherstone's assistant," said Spike. "He says that Captain Featherstone must have been called out in the night. His flat was empty when his valet arrived, and his car was gone—it has just been found in the river, three miles from here."

Valerie Howett swayed; he thought she was going to faint, and sprang to her side.

"There was a message through from Garre. The police have traced that through exchange, and it came from the castle. That's how they're able to time Featherstone's departure," Spike went on. "Whether he got to the castle or not we don't know. Jackson doesn't want me to see Bellamy until he arrives. He's coming down with a posse, and there will be trouble for Abel!"

Mr. Howett was leaving for town, and in view of the news would have stayed, but the girl insisted upon his going. She wanted to be alone. She was sure Jim was alive. Something within her told her. She was equally certain that he had fallen into Bellamy's hands.

She was in the village when the police cars arrived. The white-haired Chief Commissioner himself was in charge, and he interviewed Spike immediately on his arrival.

"You haven't seen Bellamy or warned him?"

"No, sir," said Spike.

"And you're perfectly sure that Captain Featherstone came here—to the castle, I mean?"

Digitized by Google

"I can only tell you what I've been told. A labourer on his way to work saw a car, very much like Captain Featherstone's, come out of the gate and drive off to London."

"And the car was headed in the direction of London when we found her," said the Commissioner.

He glanced up at the closed gate. Hanging by the side of the pillar was a bell, and this he pulled. There was no answer from the lodgekeeper, and he rang again. The gates were too high to climb, and the Commissioner made his decision instantly. A trolley was passing, and on his instructions a detective stopped it.

"Back your car against those gates full speed," said the Commissioner briefly.

"I shall break it, sir," said the alarmed driver.

"That is just what I want you to do."

The trolley came back at half-speed, and with a crash the gates parted, and the Commissioner led the way up the drive.

They had cleared the bushes, and were in full sight of the magnificent sweep of the castle front, where the portcullis had been, when there was a crack like the snap of a whip, and a man who was walking on Spike's left stumbled, fell to his knees, and, staring vacantly round, collapsed in a pool of blood.

"Take cover," shouted the Commissioner swiftly, and instantly the posse of detectives went to earth.

Abe Bellamy was at bay.

Valerie heard the first shot, and instinctively knew what had happened. A small crowd of people, which had gathered by the shattered gates, were being herded back by the local policeman.

"It's dangerous, miss," warned the man. "He's shooting from the loophole in the tower. I saw the smoke come out."

He had hardly spoken the word before something whizzed past her, there was a sound of smashing glass, and the policeman's arm was round her and threw her out of the line of fire. The bullet had smashed through the glass of a lamp-post and had broken the roof tiles of a cottage.

Digitized by Google

"That was a narrow escape, miss. I'll bet he was waiting for you."

Valerie was glad that her father had gone before the police had arrived. He would have been terrified of the risk she was running. It was not fair to him nor to Jim either—Jim, who at that moment was behind those grey walls a prisoner. And yet she didn't want to leave until she knew just what was happening.

Whilst she was standing there Spike sidled out of the gate and came toward her, and his face was red with excitement.

"Abe's defending the castle," he said with an almost hysterical laugh. "I told Syme the story was coming along, but the poor old fish couldn't see it."

"*Crack!*"

"There he goes again," yelled Spike. He was almost dancing with excitement.

"Is Captain Featherstone there?"

"I guess so," said Spike with what seemed to her the utmost callousness. "They'll never be able to storm the castle. The police chief is sending to Reading for a company of soldiers, and they think they'll bring artillery to shoot up the door, but that won't be much use." Without a word of apology he flew off to the inn and its telephone, and the staggered intelligence of Mr. Syme.

Later the girl learnt that London was loath to employ military forces for the seizure of the castle—more loath because Abe Bellamy was a citizen of a country that they had no desire to offend. An attempt had been made to get through to Bellamy by telephone, and after several failures a connection was made.

"You had better surrender, Bellamy," said the police chief. "It'll be easier for you in the end."

"I know the easiest end of all," said Abe Bellamy's voice, and then, after a little while: "Give me twelve hours to consider the matter."

"You can have an hour."

"Twelve," was the laconic reply. "It will take more than twelve hours before you get me any other way."

Digitized by Google

Valerie made several visits to the gate of the park. By now the police had been reinforced, and a wide cordon had been formed to prevent the near approach of any unauthorised person. Rifles had arrived for the police, and desultory firing on both sides continued throughout the afternoon.

Worn out by her anxiety, she returned home in the afternoon, to find that the servants had joined the throng which was watching this strange battle. An idea occurred to her, and she went to the wall of the garden, and, planting the ladder, mounted to the top. She had a clear view of the firing. The smoke came from one of the upper stories of Sanctuary Keep, an unrivalled position, since it commanded not only the lodge gates but all other approaches to the house. There, behind those gaunt walls that had withstood so many sieges, that had seen the coming and going of English chivalry, that had watched the gay bannerets floating above the Crusaders as they went forth to the Holy Land, one man was holding at defiance the law, not only of England, but of the world.

"*Smack!*"

Something struck the parapet a foot to her left, smashing it into flying splinters, and went whining into the blue. She came down the ladder quickly, but not so quickly that the second shot did not strike the place where she had been. A sliver of stone grazed her hand and cut it.

It was not Bellamy who had fired those shots. The dumb Chinaman, crouching at the loophole, was suddenly lifted to his feet and flung against the wall.

"That's twice you've shot at her, you fool! I told you not to aim at her again."

Sen shook himself, and with a queer little smile reloaded his rifle.

"Shoot at the bushes; the police are there," said the old man, and went down to the bedroom floor to close the iron shutters, for the night would bring storming parties.

This done, he went into the hall to examine what few visitors to the castle had ever seen—the drop door that hung in a slot in the stone ceiling out of sight, and could

Digitized by Google

be lowered or raised with as much ease as the outer door was opened. He loosened the thick rope that controlled the mechanism, and as he pulled the door came slowly down and fell into its place. He waited only to fasten it to the staples in the floor, then he hurried along the passage to the dungeon head.

"Are you there, Featherstone?"

Jim's voice answered him.

"Your friends have arrived. I guess you know that."

"I heard some firing."

"That was me at first, but now they've given 'em rifles. There'll be something doing tonight, Featherstone."

Jim came slowly up the stairs and, stretching up his hands, gripped the bars.

"They'll get you, Bellamy," he said calmly.

"They'll get me dead," was the reply. "You think I'm scared?" He glared down at the upturned face. "You're wrong! I was never so happy in my life. I'd let you go, all of you, I'm that happy. But that would spoil everything. It's knowing you're here, knowing the coppers are outside, knowing the castle will hold them and that I can stand here and laugh at them—that's the wonderful thing about it, Featherstone. Don't you envy me?"

"I'd as soon envy a toad," said Jim, and dropped his hands in time, for the old man's heavy boot smashed on the bars where his fingers had been.

He went back to the grating and crouched down to talk to Fay.

"A very pleasant young fellow, Mr. Abel Bellamy," he said.

"What's happening, Feathers? Is it somebody firing?"

"Yes, the police are outside—a whole lot of them; and the position is so serious, apparently, that they've given them rifles. I gather that the old man is putting up a fight to defend the castle."

She nodded.

"Then it's a matter of hours," she said calmly. "Feathers, what do you think of Julius?"

He hesitated.

Digitized by Google

"I can't very well say anything against Julius after all he's done for me and for Miss Howett."

"You think he's a coward, don't you? You've heard me roast the life out of him, and perhaps you think that I've got a pretty poor opinion of him. But I haven't, Feathers; I love him, and I often wonder whether he knows it. People like us don't worry about love, and even marriage doesn't mean much more than making good arrangements for the future. But I love him so much that I kind of feel happy about dying with him."

He stretched his hand through the bars and patted her head.

"You're a dear girl, Fay," he said. "If you ever get out of here I——"

"Don't say you're going to find me some honest work," she begged. "I'd rather be a thief than scrub floors. There's no pride about me."

He heard the sound of hammering, and went up the steps to investigate. The old man was there, stripped almost to the waist, and he was nailing balks of wood, one on top of the other, against the door in the passage, working at a feverish pace.

"What's the idea, Bellamy? Trying to board us up?"

The old man looked round.

"Oh, it's you, is it? Yes, I'm going to board you up."

Jim watched him silently as the long nails were driven in, and plank rose above plank until they were at the height of the old man's knees.

"They'll hang you if they get you, Bellamy," said Jim.

"Don't worry; they won't get me." He straightened his back and raised his arms carelessly.

Jim, however, was too quick for him. He dropped as the hammer struck the bars, and before Abe Bellamy could retrieve the tool which, in a second of wanton savagery, he had thrown at the man he hated, Jim had jerked the handle through the bars and had dropped it to the floor of the dungeon.

"Give me that back!" roared the old man. "Give it back, or I'll shoot the life out of you."

Digitized by Google

"Come down and get it," taunted the detective.

He waited at the foot of the stairs with the hammer poised and ready to throw, but Bellamy did not put his threat into execution. Jim heard his footsteps running along the passage, and five minutes afterwards he heard an intensification of the rifle-fire, and knew that Abe was at his post.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXVII

A Green Archer Comes to Lady's Manor

Valerie, who knew nothing of the old man's interest in her safety, went back to the house, shaken by her danger. The servants were out; her father would not be back until seven; and all the time the *"clok-clok"* of shooting was getting on her nerves. Should she go and join the village throng who were gaping at this strange sight? She wished that Spike would come. But Spike was alternately in the firing-line and at the telephone, shooting staccato phrases into the ear of the office stenographer.

The thing was so fantastic, so utterly at variance with probability, that she could not realise that it was real. Yet there was the sound of spasmodic firing to remind her that Garre Castle was besieged, and out there in the bushes, in the very wood where the dogs had chased her, men in stained khaki were lying, their cheeks against the polished butts of their rifles, waiting for a sight of Abe Bellamy. And Jim! Her heart stopped a beat at the thought of his peril. She wandered out of the house into the road, but could see nothing but the backs of the crowd that waited with bovine patience for the culmination of the tragedy. A village child passed, running, and Valerie called her.

"No, miss, nothing has happened, but more soldiers are coming."

Slowly the girl went back to the house, reluctant to enter the open door, yet in her restlessness finding no interest in the garden. She wished now that her father had stayed. She returned to the road, hoping to see somebody who would go in search of the servants. She might go herself, but——

It was absurd to be so nervous. John Wood had left before breakfast to catch his train. She would have felt safe with him.

Digitized by Google

"Clik-clok!"

The queerness of it! Here, in a peaceful English village, a battle was raging, and the villagers were looking on. She saw two men standing on the roof of a cottage, absorbed by the spectacle.

With a sigh she went into the house and to the drawing-room and tried to read. Suddenly she heard a step in the passage. One of the servants had returned, she thought, and went out into the kitchen for company. The kitchen was in semi-darkness, for it was nearly dusk, and this part of the house was poorly lit.

"Is anybody there?" she asked.

She stepped into the scullery. And then two arms came about her from behind—two long green arms, terminating in gloves of the same hue.

She shrieked and looked round into that white mask, and dropped limp into the arms of the man in green.

She came back to consciousness a few minutes afterwards. She was being carried along a tunnel. It smelt damp and fusty, and they were in absolute darkness.

Where was she? Then she remembered, and clutched at the man who was carrying her.

"Is it you?" she asked in a fearful whisper. "Is it you, father?"

He made no answer except to ask her in a muffled voice if she could walk.

"I think I can," she said. "I can't see the way."

"There isn't far to go," he said. "Put your hand on the wall; that will guide you."

The walls were of rough-hewn rock, and were running with water. Once she saw two tiny green beams of fire in the darkness ahead, and drew back.

"It's only a rat," mumbled the man.

At last they came to a place where the passage turned at right-angles, and then he caught her arm and stopped her.

"This way," he said, and she found herself mounting three stairs. "Keep your head down; the roof is low."

She obeyed and followed him in a crouching position for a dozen paces, at the end of which there were two more

Digitized by Google

steps and a long drop. But here she saw daylight shining clearly.

"Jump," said her conductor, and she sprang to the ground and walked out, under a low arch, into a room the shelves of which were filled with canned provisions.

"Where am I?" she asked. She dared not look at that hideous white face.

"You're in Garre Castle," was the answer. "And here you are going to stay, my lady."

She wrenched herself from his hands and ran to the door. It was locked and bolted. Before she could reach the kitchen entrance he had caught her. In her struggle she reached up and clutched at the mask—for mask it undoubtedly was. With one jerk she pulled it from his face and screamed.

"You—you, the Green Archer!" she gasped.

It was Lacy!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXVIII

Fay in the Dungeon

Lacy made no reply, but pushed her through a small door under the stairs, through yet another door into a hall, which she recognised as one that led to the dungeons. She thought at first he was taking her there, but it was to the library he was conducting her, and Abe Bellamy, his unshaven face streaming with perspiration, was waiting.

There was a deathly silence, broken only by the sound of firing which came faintly to their ears, and then the old man reached out and caught her by the shoulders.

"So you've come, my little dear?" he said. "You're the last of the guests—the very last." He cackled in her face with a joy that was almost insane. "Caught you all! I'd like to have taken that blind fool of a father of yours—not that he is your father. I'd like to have taken him, Valerie, but he doesn't matter. All who matter are here. All the people who could talk, all the people who hated me—they're all here." He pointed to the floor.

She looked round at Lacy.

"For God's sake help me!" she begged. "My father will pay you!"

"What's the use of asking Lacy? Lacy wouldn't help you. You might as well appeal to me," said Bellamy.

With a kick he sent the table flying, threw up the rug, and snapped open the door. As he did so she saw him point the rifle which straddled a chair, and drop its muzzle into the yawning pit.

"Go down. You'll find some friends," he said, "some good friends! Go down, Valerie. This time I'll have no fool mistakes with you. I've blundered twice with you, but the third time you're going to pay."

He pointed to the stairs that led into the void, and she went down without a word. Watching her, his rifle poised, he saw her outlined against a strange oblong of light.

Digitized by Google

"The door's open," he roared, and then sniffed.

His quick brain found the solution immediately.

"Burnt out the lock, eh? They'll have a little more space to die in," he said, and swung the stone slab into position.

Lacy noticed that he did not lower the parquet covering.

"So that's where you keep them, is it, Bellamy?" he said breathlessly. "Who's there?"

"Julius Savini and his wife are there. Featherstone's there."

"Featherstone?" said the other in an awe-stricken voice. "Who are the people outside attacking?"

"The police," said Bellamy laconically, and the man went livid.

A grotesque sight he was in the ill-fitting costume that he had bought to masquerade as the Green Archer. It was Bellamy's idea—Bellamy, who had set him to make a reconnaissance of Lady's Manor dressed in his fantastic array. He had nearly been caught that night, and the memory of it made him sweat.

"You told me there was a fair on outside, that the military were holding a gymkhana. You wicked old liar! Where's my money? I'm going."

"Which way are you going?" asked Bellamy suavely.

"Back through Lady's Manor, as soon as I can change these clothes. I've had enough of you, Bellamy. You're in for trouble, and I'm not going to be found with you. And if they ask me to give evidence against you, by God——"

"You'll give it," said the old man.

He opened his safe, took out a roll of notes, and threw them on to the table.

"There's your money. You can go as soon as you like. Have you a gun?"

"I certainly have," said the other. "Do you think I'm a fool to trust myself in this house without one?"

For answer Bellamy put his foot on the stone trap and opened it.

"Bring Savini up. He isn't armed, but he's ready to show fight."

Digitized by Google

The man frowned.

"Bring him up yourself," he said.

"And leave you to open the door to the police?" sneered Bellamy. "Go down, you rat. What are you afraid of?"

Lacy's gun was in his hand; he was white to the lips.

"I'm not going down," he said huskily, "unless you go first."

Bellamy shrugged his broad shoulders, and without another word stepped down, his gunman following at a respectful distance. Too respectful, for Bellamy's stairs were narrow, and he who reached the floor first could, by a swift sidelong movement, come back parallel to the man who was following; and this Bellamy did. Lacy felt his ankle gripped, tried frantically to recover his balance, and came headlong to the stone floor. Abe Bellamy only waited long enough to take the revolver he had dropped and put it in his pocket, then he went upstairs to stage the last act of the drama.

* * * * *

Valerie stood at the tunnel entrance of the room, not knowing what to do, scarcely capable of lifting one foot before another. She was dimly conscious that a girl was addressing her.

"Miss Howett!"

Valerie stared uncomprehendingly, and then:

"Isn't it Mrs. Savini?" she asked shakily.

In another moment Valerie was sobbing in Fay Savini's arms, and Fay felt her shivering as though she were sick of a fever.

"Is Captain Featherstone here?"

"You can see him, but he is not with us."

"Where is he? I must see him."

She scarcely noticed Julius, though it was he who showed her the grille and called Jim Featherstone to her.

"Jim, Jim!" she called eagerly, and his brain reeled at the sound of her voice.

"Is it you, Valerie? Oh, my God!"

"We shall not be here for long," she said. "The police

Digitized by Google

are being reinforced by soldiers, and they are certain to catch him, and Holland thinks that the castle will be carried tonight."

"How did he get you here?"

"The Green Archer brought me."

"The Green Archer? Impossible! The Green Archer?"

She nodded.

"It was Lacy."

Jim sat back on his heels and stared into the darkness where she was.

"It can't possibly be Lacy," he said. "Are you sure?"

"I pulled off his mask. I am absolutely sure."

"It is incredible. I can't understand. I don't think it matters very much who is the Green Archer, my poor darling. That you are here is the crowning horror."

"What do you think he intends doing—Bellamy? What can he do in the time?"

"I am certain that he meditates something very dreadful," he said. "But whatever it is, Valerie, we have to meet it like—I nearly said English, but I forgot that you're American. We've got to die like good Anglo-Saxons, if it comes to that."

"You think there's no hope at all of getting into the castle?" she asked.

"None whatever." Jim's voice was emphatic. It was kinder that she should know. "Tell me how the Green Archer brought you here. Surely there is a cordon round the castle?"

"We came by way of an underground passage. There must be one connecting Lady's Manor with the castle," she said. "I have always suspected the existence of one."

"And I," said Jim, "since you told me of the servants' gossip about 'Loveway.' The very name of your house is self-explanatory. It is Lady's Manor, the house built by a de Curcy for his lady love. And these 'loveways' between houses were very common in olden times. That is the way the Green Archer came, and that is also why you saw him at Lady's Manor that night. He was on his way to the castle."

Digitized by Google

"You forget that I saw him in the grounds"; which was true, as Jim remembered.

They were interrupted by the arrival of Julius with a startling piece of information.

"Lacy? In the dungeon?"

"If he were only in the dungeon it wouldn't be remarkable," said Julius, "but he's wearing the kit of the Green Archer. Fay's just taken him some water. I think the old man must have thrown him down the stairs."

"Lacy here?" she whispered fearfully. "Oh, Jim, can't you come through?"

"Julius will look after you. Have no fear," he said, though he was far from feeling the assurance he assumed. "I might be able to get through later, dear. I have chipped away the cement from two of the bars. I have the old man's hammer, and it is distinctly useful."

He had been resting when she came, but now he resumed the work, and for the next hour the tap of his hammer was incessant.

Valerie went back to Julius.

"Is he hurt badly?" she asked.

"It is only his head," said Julius casually. "That's the only part of Lacy that you couldn't possibly hurt, not if you ran a roller over it. He was the man who carried you from your house, wasn't he? I heard you telling Feathers. Well, he's welcome. He had a lethal weapon tucked away under his gay blouse that may be very useful."

Julius exhibited with pride his discovery.

"Naturally," he admitted frankly, "my first instincts were to search him, for fear any of his valuable property fell into dishonest hands. But beyond the pistol there was nothing," he said loudly. "He's under the impression that Abe gave him a bank-roll. Either that's an illusion, or else the old man took it back when he had 'outed' him. Abe never likes wasting money. And I think he's right," and tapped his bulging pocket unconsciously.

Valerie went out to find Fay fastening a rough dressing around the masquerader's head. A ludicrous spectacle he was, his ill-fitting costume ragged and bloodstained and soiled.

Digitized by Google

"I had a lot of money when I came down here," he was saying. "It's not here now. Money hasn't got legs. It can't walk away."

"If you'd had it then, you would have it now," said Fay primly. "And I've had money that went faster than the air-mail in a gale of wind. You're not accusing my Julius of having robbed you, are you?"

"I don't know what I'm accusing your Julius of," growled the man, "but he took my gun. Why shouldn't he take the money?"

"Because the gun was there to take, and the money wasn't," said Fay gently. "Is it wise to accuse people who have saved your life of having robbed you? Old Bellamy must have taken it himself."

"Why didn't he take the gun?" demanded the man logically. "That's a thing he'd want to get back. Where is that gun, by the way?"

"Julius has it," said Fay, and added with unmistakable emphasis: "And Julius will keep it."

"What's the old man going to do? He can't keep us here forever. Where can I sleep?"

"You can either sleep on the stairs or you can sleep under the stairs."

"Ain't there any beds here?" demanded Lacy truculently.

"There's bed-rock," said the humorous Fay. "And that is where you're sleeping, Lacy. And if you start kicking you'll get kicked. You're a low brute, anyway, to take this lady from her home; and if Featherstone gets you——"

"Is he here?" asked the horrified Lacy.

"He's not here for the moment; he's on the other side of the bars."

"I hope he'll keep there," said Lacy fervently.

Julius and Jim took turns throughout the evening to use the one tool which had providentially fallen into their hands. Before nine o'clock, by the united efforts of both, the grille was wrenched back, and Jim wriggled through to the girl.

And there and then, without any preliminary or apology, he took her in his arms and kissed her.

Digitized by Google

No further time was lost in explanations or demanding of explanations. Jim had confided his decision to Savini, and found that Julius held the same view. The settee was dragged from the wall and its legs broken off. The back was low enough to allow them to push it through the hall, though it meant tearing at the costly fabric which covered it.

"What is the idea? Are you furnishing the apartment next door?" asked Fay.

"A whole lot of things are going to happen next door," said Jim. "That table looks good to me," he said as with his hammer he knocked off first one and then the other of the legs and pushed it through to Julius.

"You can help here, Lacy." He called the man forward, and Lacy came quickly.

"What do you want me to do, Captain?" he said.

"Creep up to the top of the stairs, and the moment you see Bellamy shout and jump, for I'll be coming up quicker than you can get down. Up there!" Jim took him by the ear and led him to the stairs and posted him just beneath the level of the grating. "The moment he comes to that barrier shout. Is that clear to you?"

"Of course it's clear," said the indignant Lacy. "Do you think I'm a fool?"

"I wouldn't like to tell you what I think about you," was the unsatisfactory reply.

He left the man watching at the head of the stairs and went back to Julius.

"I'm not so sure that any of these precautions will be worth a snap of the fingers," he said, "but they're the best we can do. If we only had some nails!"

He was erecting a barricade around the jagged hole in the wall, and to assist him Fay had brought into employment the longest portion of the hose, which she fixed to the gas-bracket which was nearest to them. This gave sufficient light to enable them to work. Chairs, tables, bedding, all were dragged into the dungeon, and whilst they worked, Mr. Lacy sat quietly on the top step, hating Abe Bellamy, but hating worse the man into whose company fortune had so strangely thrown him.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXIX

THE MAN FROM CLOISTER WOOD

SMOKE was coming from the chimney of the little cottage in Cloister Wood. A small fire burnt in the kitchen grate, and a man with a fork in his hand stood watching gravely the sizzling of a cutlet. The blinds of the cottage were drawn, the doors locked tight. A curious passer-by might have knocked and continued to knock without receiving a reply.

It was late in the afternoon, drawing on to evening, and he had come by the direct road, which avoided Garre. After a while the cutlet was cooked, and he picked it up with a knife and laid it on a plate that was warming before the fire. From his overcoat pocket he took a small paper bag and emptied two bread-rolls upon the spotless table. When his frugal meal was finished he took a pipe from his pocket, filled it deliberately and lit it, leaning back in the Windsor chair, and contemplating the wall with a fixity of gaze which suggested that his mind was elsewhere.

He took a telegram from his pocket and read it for the third time. Its perusal seemed to give him a certain amount of pleasure, for he smiled. It was nearly an hour before he rose at last and walked back to the room which first Spike Holland and then Abe Bellamy had visited. The folded suit was still on the bed, but it was not as the man had left it. And the huge mud-prints of Bellamy's feet had been visible from the first.

He strolled back to the kitchen, found a book, and settled down to read. Once or twice he lifted his head to listen. He had noticed the sound before, but now its very insistence impressed him, and he went out through the back door into the unkempt garden behind the cottage. Putting both hands behind his ears, he turned his face slowly toward the area from whence the sound came, and presently he located it.

Digitized by Google

Immediately he returned to the house, locked the back door, put on his hat, and went out—this time through the front door. He thought he had heard the footsteps of a man coming along the road, and slipped into the shadow of the wood, waiting until the walker was gone. When he was nearly out of sight the stranger emerged, walked rapidly along the road, crossing a field, and reached another secondary road; and then, and only then, did he stop one of the passers-by to ask a question.

"That sounds to me like shooting," he said, and the man he addressed grinned.

"That's shooting all right, sir. They say the old man up at Garre Castle is being attacked by soldiers. I don't know what there is in it, but there's been shooting going on all morning."

The stranger quickened his pace and came to Garre by a footpath, which brought him into the village almost opposite to Lady's Manor. The firing was unmistakable now, and he could see the crowd stretched across the village street. A dozen paces away was a policeman directing traffic to a circuitous route, and he went up to him.

"Yes, sir, old Bellamy is shooting up the police," said the officer with a certain pride in the notoriety which had come to his division. "We are getting more soldiers down; there are two companies in the castle grounds now. Are you a stranger about here, sir?"

"Yes, I am," said the other.

"Almost everybody in the village is with that crowd. I was just saying to one of Mr. Howett's servants that she'd be better employed if she went back and cooked the dinner."

"Is Mr. Howett here?"

"He's gone to town, by all accounts. The young lady's in the house. Do you want to see her, sir?"

"Yes, I think so." The stranger hesitated, and at that moment the policeman raised his hand to stop a trolley that was coming toward Garre.

When he looked round the stranger had disappeared. The officer thought he saw him walking up the garden path to Lady's Manor, and in this he was not mistaken.

Digitized by Google

The door of the manor was wide open, and he raised his hand to knock, thought better of it, and walked boldly into the stone-flagged hall, turned the handle of the drawing-room door softly, and peeped in. An open book lay on Valerie Howett's writing-table, and there was a little heap of knitting on the sofa.

He crept softly into the kitchen and looked round. He seemed familiar with the plan of the house, as well he might be, for he had been there many times. The garden gate was half open, and he went out. Against the wall he saw a ladder, but there was no sign of mistress or servants.

It was almost dark when he heard voices outside the house, and, opening the door that led to the cellars, he passed through, closed it behind him, and went quickly down the stairs. The cellar was almost in complete darkness, but he walked unerringly to one of the cellaret doors, inserted a key, and passed into the dark interior.

Stooping, he lifted the lid of a box and took out a small square lamp. A touch of his finger, and the place was illuminated. He put his hand into the box again and took out a short green bow and two arrows. These latter he balanced on his finger, and one did not satisfy him, for he returned it and brought another in its place. Then he switched out the light and waited.

He heard the upper door leading to the cellar open, and one of the servants came down carrying a candle. He heard her fill a coal-scuttle, and then began a conversation between somebody in the scullery and the carrier of coals.

"What has happened to Miss Valerie?" said the voice upstairs.

"I didn't see her," replied the girl with the coal-scuttle. "Isn't she in her room?"

"No," came the answer. "I've just been up. And she's not in the garden either."

"She wasn't in the crowd," said the second girl, resting on her shovel. "And she couldn't have got through it, anyway, because the police will allow nobody to pass!"

The man sitting on the box in the dark listened idly, and presently the girl went upstairs and the door was shut.

Digitized by Google

Hour after hour he waited, until he heard a commotion above, excited voices asking questions, and then he came out of his cell and, creeping up the stairs, listened. What he heard brought him back to his retreat. A few moments later, when Mr. Howett came into the underground room and opened the door where the stranger had been, the little cellar was empty.

The firing outside the castle had dropped to an occasional shot at long intervals. The Government had acceded to the urgent representations of the police, and soon before nightfall a company of infantry arrived in Garre and took up its position in open order about the castle. Toward midnight there was a rumble of heavy wheels, and a section of artillery came down the village street, unlimbered at the gate of Garre Castle, and brought their guns into position for action, covering the castle entrance.

Spike sought information.

"We intend doing nothing till the morning," said the officer in charge, "and it will depend entirely upon what Bellamy does whether we take action then. If he continues to fire with daylight we shall batter in the door with the guns, under cover of which the infantry will rush the main entrance."

"Why not dynamite the door tonight?" urged Spike. "I suppose you know that Miss Valerie Howett has disappeared? Mr. Howett's on the wire now to London."

"Those are our instructions," said the officer shortly.

Spike went in search of the Commissioner, but received no satisfaction.

"I don't think it matters whether we attack tonight or tomorrow morning," he said. "The danger to those unfortunate people inside will come when the attack is delivered. That is my opinion, and it is also the opinion of the Secretary of State. We think nothing will be gained by blowing in the gate of the castle tonight. Perhaps a night's sleep will find Bellamy in a different frame of mind."

"You don't know Bellamy," said the grim Spike.

Every train was bringing reporters and sightseers from London. The story of the siege of Garre had filled the

Digitized by Google

evening newspapers' splash pages. Spike, proud possessor of a bed and sitting-room, found himself the willing host of a dozen colleagues, to whom, being young, the very idea of sleep was repugnant. He was snatching a hasty dinner when Mr. Howett came in.

"I'm going to show some of the police the way into the castle," he said. "Will you come?"

Spike left his supper untasted.

"I know the secret way. It is one I discovered some time ago," said Mr. Howett.

He looked terribly old; his face was the colour of putty; and when he spoke there was a quaver in his voice which alarmed the reporter. Spike did not ask him how this secret entrance into the castle had been discovered or to what purpose the discovery had been put. He joined the half a dozen detectives in Mr. Howett's car and followed him through the basement into the cellar.

"There is an underground passage here. It connects Lady's Manor with the castle." He indicated the middle of the three smaller cellars, and, taking a key from his pocket, he turned the lock and went in.

The cellar was a narrow one and contained nothing but a large box at the end. This Mr. Howett pulled towards him, and they saw that its movement disclosed a square aperture in the floor and one of a similar size in the wall. A flight of steps brought them to a passage. They had not gone far when there was a thump, and Mr. Howett, who was leading, uttered an exclamation of pain. The detective's light showed the cause. Across the passage, barring it completely, was a door. The secret way into Garre Castle was closed.

"That door has never been closed before," said Mr. Howett in a troubled voice. "I remember seeing it; it was always fastened back to the wall. There are four other doors between here and the castle, and it means that we shall have to blow every one down before we get through, and we will never break them."

"Are they locked?"

"No, they're barred," said Mr. Howett. "There is a

Digitized by Google

thick steel bar at the back of each of them, and the socket is almost impossible for you to force." He brooded a moment. "I'm sorry, gentlemen," he said in a low tone. "I hoped that I was showing you an easy way, but it seems that I have given you a more difficult task than if I had asked you to force the doors of the castle."

They turned back. Spike was the most disappointed of all, if Mr. Howett be excepted.

"Do you think Miss Howett was taken that way, Mr. Howett?" he asked.

"I am afraid so," said Howett. "The servants admit that they were out and that they had seen Valerie go into Lady's Manor. It's my own fault; I should have kept more men-servants."

His voice grew fainter and fainter, and as he finished Spike caught him in his arms. A hastily summoned doctor gave a more encouraging report than Spike had dared to hope.

Leaving the stricken man in charge of the housekeeper, Spike went back to the castle gates, to find that new orders had been received from London and that an attack was to be delivered at one o'clock in the morning. He looked at his watch; it was ten o'clock—a fatal hour for the little band of prisoners in the dread dungeons of Garre.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXX

The Flood

Lacy was growing cramped when he heard a step in the passage and crouched back, although it was so dark that it was almost impossible for the old man to see him. Presently he caught the glint of a lantern, and Abe Bellamy stepped over the barrier.

"Mr. Bellamy!" said Lacy in a frantic whisper.

Bellamy swung round.

"Hullo! How did you get there?"

"For God's sake don't shout!" said Lacy. Fortunately, as he thought, the noise of hammering below would drown the sound of the old man's voice.

"What do you want?" he asked in a lower key.

"Let me out," pleaded Lacy. "They put me here to watch. They've got a gun, and they told me to shout the moment you appeared."

The old man put down his lantern, took something from his pocket, carried it to the corner of the room, and lit a light. He went to the other corner and did the same.

"Mr. Bellamy, let me out. I've told you——"

Jim heard the frantic shriek, and flew up the stairs just as the old man vaulted over the barrier. Twice Jim fired, but the bullets carried high. And then, looking round, he saw a spark.

"Get down," he shouted, and leapt the stairs, falling to his knees as the first of the explosions occurred.

The sound deafened him, and the second that followed drove down and broke a hole in the roof, scattering chips of stone in all directions.

"What is it?" It was the terrified voice of Julius.

"Stand by that hole," said Jim curtly. "And you, Lacy,

Digitized by Google

come here. Why didn't you tell me that the old man was there?"

"I didn't see him——" began Lacy.

"You saw him and heard him. You were trying to get him to let you out and leave us to die like rats."

"What's that noise?" asked Julius fearfully.

"It is It," said Jim.

The gas flare was burning, and the dungeon was slightly illuminated.

"There's one chance for us," said Jim, and then his eyes fell upon the cemented trap-door. "No, there's two," he said, and smashed at the cement covering which Abe had laid down.

From above came a steady, hollow roar of sound.

"What is it? What is it?" blubbered Lacy. "What is he doing?"

"You'll see in a moment," said Jim, and as he spoke there came bounding down the stairs a veritable torrent of water. In such volume did it come that, even as it cascaded over the steps, it showed an almost solid line. Instantly the floor was covered. Jim was working up to his ankles, and every moment the water was rising.

"I can't do it," he said, and brought the hammer down with a crash in the center of the stone. Under the terrific impact he saw a crack appear. He struck again and again, and every second it became more difficult, for he had to strike through the water, which held up the force of the blow. At last he could do no more.

Julius was already behind the barrier. Lacy had crawled through to where the women were, and now Jim leapt over the accumulation of bedsteads, sofas, and tables, and the two men went to work like slaves to cover the entrance of the hole, to fix the bedding so that it served to take off the force of the water.

"I don't think it's much good," said Jim as he came back, wet from head to foot. "The old man has blown up the water pipes."

The water was already flowing into the inner room; but now, thanks to the barricade they had prepared, the inflow

Digitized by Google

was very small and amounted only to a trickle. Jim knew that the faster the water grew the greater the pressure became, the greater would be the danger.

The ventilating shaft was flush with the roof; that was the one comfort of the situation. How long would it take for the water to rise, he wondered, and made a rough calculation, based on the rate it had filled the dungeon. The volume of the water had surprised him. He put two hours as the outside limit before the water reached the roof.

"I think we'd better go out and get on the steps beneath the library," he said. "The ladies will be on the top landing, you and Lacy had better take the next position, and I will take the next. I'm not being heroic," he said. "All our heads will be nearly level with the roof, and it might be kinder to have the ladies in front."

His precautions were justified. He stopped only to turn out all the gases before he rejoined them; and he was hardly out of the room before there was a crash and the barricade broke. The water was up to his knees before he reached the stairs.

"What did you put the lights out for?" asked Lacy angrily. "That means we're going to die in the dark."

"If you leave the lights on you'll certainly die in the dark, my friend," said Jim. "We need all the air we can get, but if you left the lights burning you would be breathing gas in a few minutes."

He waited on the fifth lowest step, and presently he felt the water about his feet. Five minutes later it was around his ankles. He waited till it was knee-deep before he went up another step.

"Valerie, will you come here?"

She joined him in the darkness, and he put his arm about her. He was now on the highest step that it was possible for him to stand upon, and the water had not yet reached him. But he had not long to wait. So wet were his feet and his legs that he did not recognise the encroachments until, putting down his hand to make sure, he felt the water at his knee-level.

And now it seemed to be rising more and at even greater

Digitized by Google

speed. "Give me that hammer, Savini. I'll try the lock of the trap above us."

"I didn't bring the hammer," said Julius. "I left it in the dungeon."

A silence that was painful.

"I don't suppose we could have done much, anyway. Certainly this lock wouldn't be easily forced."

The water was up to his waist, but the air was still pure, and there was no pressure. What would happen when the water reached the ventilators he did not care to think about. Higher and higher it rose, until it was about his breast, and he lifted the girl to his level and kissed her.

"This is a queer way out," he said, and felt the water lapping his chin.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXXI

The Last Visit of the Green Archer

Sitting at his bedroom window, his rifle resting on the window-ledge, Abe Bellamy looked down into the dark grounds. The lights of the village had been extinguished by the military authorities. Lights were even forbidden in the houses, and in a sense this favoured the defender, for such lights as there were had been in his eyes.

Now he could see clearly. He saw the three men who wriggled their way up the slope inch by inch, and a shot brought them to a halt. But they had seen the flash, and a machine-gun opened up, and he lay flat on the floor and heard the bullets whistle over his head.

Presently the firing ceased, and he peeped out again. They were coming. Again he fired, and this time he hit somebody. He heard a cry. And then, watching, he saw the men were withdrawing, and he seized the opportunity to go down to the guard-room. The water was pouring from the broken mains in two greeny-white columns, and, stepping over the barrier, he waded to the grille and flashed a light. The water was nearly level with the top stair, and he nodded his satisfaction. They would not come in time to save the lives of these rats who were drowning.

In the hall he found Sen, and bade him gruffly to return to the car. The dumb man pointed to the door, and Bellamy understood. He guessed what they would be doing. They would dynamite the entrance and rush it.

He went back to the guard-room, closed and locked the door, and locked the door from the hall to the passage. It would take them some time before they discovered what was wrong—a longer time to stop the flow of the water. Nothing could save his enemies. That was the happy thought he brought with him when he took up his position in the doorway of the library, waiting for the final crash.

Digitized by Google

There were two entrances to the library: the first from the hall, the second from the foot of the narrow staircase which led to the room above where Lacy used to hide. The second door was ordinarily kept fastened, but the old man had unlocked it in preparation for emergency. The water would be up to their necks by now. He guessed that they were standing on the stairs. In ten minutes they would be dead, and nobody would have known how they had died if he could have only brought the water-main to the chamber beneath the library. Now they must know, with whatever satisfaction that would give them. He had been compelled to blow an aperture between the two dungeons so that the water should reach the old home of the grey lady. If she were only there! That was the one unpleasant thought he had. She had escaped.

He was still thinking when there came a terrible crash at the door, a crash which shook the castle to its foundations. A second explosion followed immediately, and he knew that the outer door was down and that only the drop door remained. But the drop door was coated with steel, and would be a tougher proposition.

He walked into the library, leaving Sen squatting with his rifle on his knees, confronting his doom with an imperturbable face. The old man was ready to die; he only wanted to be certain that all he had set himself to do had been accomplished. This done, there was no excuse for living.

The sound of the farther door opening made him spin round.

"Stand where you are!" said the newcomer sternly. "You know me, Abel Bellamy!"

The intruder stood stiffly for a time, holding the bent bow, his right hand drawn back almost to his ear. Like a statue he stood, menacing, a veritable figure of fate, and the light from the silver lamp gleamed on the green arrow that was pointed to Abel Bellamy's heart.

"Don't move, or you'll die. And I do not want you to die yet, until you know."

"The Green Archer!" said Bellamy in strangled tones. "You—you, the Green Archer!"

Digitized by Google

"One by one I have slain your associates, the vile tools you employed to hound down the innocent and oppress the weak. One by one, Abe Bellamy. You are the third. What have you to say that I should not give you judgment to die?"

The words had a strange and awful ring. Though this Bellamy did not know, they were taken word for word from the English sentence of death.

"You—the Green Archer!" he could only gasp, his mind in a ferment.

He could only stare, fascinated, at this sinister figure, and could notice such little details as the presence of a second arrow between the disengaged fingers of the archer's left hand. He wondered dully whether it wasn't a great strain to hold a bow so tense and so immovable.

Bellamy's gun was on the desk. To reach it he had to take two paces. He calculated them carefully, but so had the Green Archer—he knew that. He must temporise.

"If I've ever done anything that money can put right——"

"Money!" said the other scornfully. "How could you offer money to me? Can money buy back the eight years of torment you meted out to an innocent woman? Can money bring back the lash and take the scars from the skin of a man flogged by your orders and through your machinations? Can money——"

"Wait, wait!" said Bellamy eagerly. "I can give you something after your own heart—something that would please the Green Archer."

The eyes of the man with the bow narrowed.

"What do you mean?" he asked quickly.

"They are there!" Bellamy almost screamed the words. "Drowned like rats, all of 'em. They're in hell now—Featherstone, Valerie Howett. As for you, damn you——!"

He leapt, and as his foot left the ground there came to his ears the thunder of the second explosion. It was a knell, a grand salute to the passing of one who feared neither God nor man nor judgment.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXXII

When the Waters Rose

Whilst Abe Bellamy was still in Sanctuary Keep, fingering the hot barrel of his rifle, five people in the cellars below waited for death. Lacy, mute with fear; the Savinis crouched together, silent, resigned.

"Featherstone."

Jim did not answer.

"If bank-notes are soiled with water, are they any good?"

Lacy whimpered something. It was the only answer that Julius received. And then a miracle happened. The waters began to recede faster than they had risen.

"What has happened?"

"A respite," was the grim reply. "The trap to the lower dungeon has broken, and the waters are rushing in there. As soon as the lower vault is filled the waters will rise again."

"Can't we get out?" whined Lacy. "It's all very well for you—you're a copper, and you're expected to take risks. It's your job to get us out——"

"Shut up!" snarled Julius.

But the man was crazy with fear.

"You've got my money, Savini, you sneaking thief—took it from me when I was knocked out."

Jim heard a scuffle and a scream from Fay. There was the sound of a blow and a splash.

"Julius has gone!" screamed the girl. "He can't swim—you beast!"

There was a second splash, and a roar from Lacy as he struck the water. Jim ran down the stairs. The waters were still receding, and there was no danger from drowning. He stepped to the floor of the room and waded toward the sound of the struggle.

Digitized by Google

Presently his outstretched hands found a head, and he gripped it by the hair and jerked it backwards.

"Up the stairs, you dog!" he hissed, and Lacy's answer was to turn and grapple him.

Valerie stood frozen with horror. The darkness was absolute; she could see nothing of that fight in the black void, but the shrieks of the half-maddened Lacy were terrible to hear. She felt Fay push past her and go down.

"Julius!" Her agonised call echoed through the vaulted death-room.

"I'm all right—where is the Captain?"

"Here, toward the steps," she screamed, and, launching herself into space toward the pandemonium, she fell on the bent back of Lacy. He had Jim by the throat, and was forcing his head under water when Fay's providential arrival turned the tables.

"Get back to the stairs," gasped Jim.

His head had struck against the stone wall in the earlier stages of the struggle, and he felt the blood running down his cheek. Fay fell back as the men clinched, but by now Julius had groped his way to the combatants, and by their united efforts the madman was overpowered.

"Bring him to the stairs quick; the water is rising!" said Jim, and they dragged Lacy up step by step.

Here was a problem which Jim had not foreseen. It could make very little difference in the end, but to nerves already tense the presence of this howling thing that was once a man was insupportable. Lacy was still struggling, and the journey up the unrailed stairs was a nightmare.

"I'll keep him in front of me," said Jim when they had reached the limit of height.

"I don't want to die! I don't want to die!" yelled the terror-stricken crook. "Curse you, Featherstone! You beat me up once—you dog! You brought me here; I'd never a' been in Garre if it hadn't been for you."

"Keep quiet or I'll choke you!"

Jim's arms were about his throat, and in that position the man was helpless.

"You've put me on a lower step so I'll drown first,"

Digitized by Google

sobbed Lacy. "I wish Coldharbour had got that girl—we wouldn't a' been here then!"

"Your head is touching the roof—you can't get higher—silence!"

Jim heard voices above—two men were talking. One was Bellamy's. He could not recognise the other. To shout for help was a waste of breath. Something touched the calf of his leg; he put down his hand and found it was a small table that had floated from the dungeon. He drew it to him, wondering to what use it could be put; and then an idea occurred to him, and he turned it over so that its legs were sticking up from the water and the top submerged. If he could get the girl on to that the legs would hold against the vaulting, and she would have support—perhaps a breathing-space in the dome of the roof. A second's thought showed him that this would only mean the prolongation of the agony, and he kicked the table away.

"The water's up to my neck!" gasped Lacy, and began to struggle. "Blawst you, let me get up!"

"I'll throw you from the steps if you don't keep quiet," said Jim sternly, and as he spoke the man wrenched himself free and struck at him. The blow did not reach home. They heard him fall into the water, and his scream set the girl shivering.

"I can't swim—help!"

"Stay where you are, Featherstone." It was Fay's voice, and it held a note of command. "It only means a few minutes more for him."

But Jim had heard the voice almost by his side, and again he dragged the gunman to safety, a blubbering, weeping creature, more dead than alive.

And then Jim spoke what was in his mind.

He bent his head to the girl.

"Valerie," he said, "I was jealous of John Wood."

"I was afraid you were," she answered in an even tone. "He fascinates me. I like him. But it's not the kind of liking that I have for—you."

As she dropped her head her chin touched water, and she closed her eyes. Silence reigned, save for the whimpering

Digitized by Google

of Lacy. There was no hope now, save to throw themselves into the water and float until the end came when they could float no more.

He stretched on tiptoe to keep his mouth from the water, and told her to do the same.

"What was that?" whispered Julius.

They had heard a thud above them, as though a heavy article of furniture had dropped, and then on top of it came a voice like thunder that shivered the water and sent little ripples dancing about Jim's lips. It was an explosion, he knew, and it was close at hand. If the police could only get into the castle in time! It was a matter of minutes now, for the water was not rising at the same pace; the obstructions of the doorways called for greater pressure and greater volume.

Then, over his head, he heard a click, and there appeared in the water under his eyes the reflection of a line of light.

The trap was opening!

He put his hand and pushed, but he had to press the other end of the stone through water.

"Savini—Valerie—push!" he gasped, and their hands went up slowly and the trap moved.

Somebody was above, pressing on the other end of the stone to lift it.

"Are you all there?" asked a voice.

"Yes. Can you pull at the end that's raised?"

A hand came over the edge of the stone—a brown, sinewy hand, and the trap rose until it was perpendicular.

Fay was the first to emerge, and fell exhausted upon the rug before the fireplace. Julius followed, and then Lacy thrust his way madly, striking out left and right in his terror.

Valerie caught the edge of the trap, and Julius drew her to safety. She looked back. Jim had disappeared, and she was staring into the black water.

"Where is he—Jim?" she said wildly. "That man threw him into the water!"

Julius dragged off his soddened coat and went down the steps. There was no room to swim—he must dive. With-

Digitized by Google

out hesitation the Eurasian plunged into the darkness. He could see the square of light from the open trap, and presently his hand touched a coat, and he clutched it.

Striking out with all his strength, he dragged the unconscious Featherstone to the top of the submerged steps, and a few seconds later Jim was safe.

When he opened his eyes, the first thing he saw was a Tommy, rifle in hand, his bayonet glittering. The soldier stood in the doorway, and he was staring at Abe Bellamy, spread-eagled on his back, his arms outstretched, and through his heart two arrows, so close together that they almost touched.

"Who did that?" asked the soldier.

Jim struggled to his feet and looked round the room. But the man who had opened the trap and who had slain the terror had vanished.

Mr. Howett met them in the hall and drew the girl away from the still figure of the Chinaman that lay there so quiet.

Jim left the girl to the care of her father, and staggered back to the room, faint and aching. Lacy's blow had caught him on the point, and he had momentarily been knocked out. The water was now welling up through the floor, and had already covered the passage from the dining-room and was flowing into the hall. He sent a police officer to find the main supply and turn it off, and, with the assistance of Jackson, who was one of the first to enter the castle, lifted the body of Bellamy to the sofa and searched his pockets.

He was thus engaged when Spike Holland came into the room.

"Is he dead?" asked Spike.

Jim nodded.

"He is quite—I am nearly. Get an ambulance to shift that."

"That" was Lacy, who still lay moaning on the floor.

When Spike returned, Jim was sitting on the sofa by the side of the dead man, his head in his hands. He looked up as Spike came in.

"Where is Savini and his wife?" he asked.

Digitized by Google

"I've sent 'em to my rooms. Savini was anxious to know if I had a fire in the room and if water ruined bank-notes."

Jim smiled faintly.

"If the Green Archer killed Bellamy he must be still in the house," said Spike while he was sitting at the table waiting for his call to come through. "He couldn't have escaped by the passage."

"Which passage is that? The underground passage from Lady's Manor? Why couldn't he have come that way?"

"Because the doors are all bolted on the inside. As soon as I've read this message through to the paper, I want to assure myself on that point."

"I really have found the Green Archer this time, Holland," said Jim as he rose stiffly.

"I found him quite a long time ago," said Spike complacently. "His name is Mr. Howett, but I don't know that I'm going to print that fact."

"If you do," said Jim, "you'll be printing something that is absolutely untrue. The Green Archer is——"

But he changed his mind.

"The Green Archer is——?" suggested Spike urgently. "Give me the story, Featherstone—there's time for the early edition."

Jim dragged himself to the door and looked back.

"Perhaps I'll never tell you," he said.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXXIII

Julius Roasts Money

At the Blue Boar, Jim found that the faithful Angus had arrived with a change of clothing in preparation for his master's release—an act of thoughtfulness which Captain Featherstone appreciated. As soon as he had changed and shaved he made his way to the Howetts' house, expecting to find that the girl had gone to bed. To his surprise she was in the drawing-room, and with her was John Wood.

She came toward him with her hands outstretched, and he took her in his arms.

"I wanted to stay with you, but daddy hurried me away," she said. "You know Mr. Wood?"

Jim nodded to the man, and John Wood, with a little smile on his sensitive lips, watched him steadily, his eyes never leaving the detective's face.

"I have a great surprise for you, Jim," she said. "The most wonderful thing has happened! Guess whom I found when I came here?"

He shook his head.

"My—my mother!"

As she spoke the door opened and Mr. Howett came in, on his arm a frail, beautiful woman, and Jim instantly recognised the likeness between the two.

"This is Jim—mother," she said the word shyly. "You've heard of Jim Featherstone?"

Mrs. Held took both his hands in hers.

"I owe you a great deal, Captain Featherstone," she said, "but I think you will have your reward."

Her eyes strayed past Jim to the man on the sofa, and she smiled.

"You must meet my son, Captain Featherstone," she said.

"Your son!" gasped Jim.

She smiled at his astonishment.

Digitized by Google

"John Wilfred Bellamy," she said quietly, and Jim, who knew so much, yet did not know this vital fact, could only look bewildered from one to the other.

He was still feeling the effects of his struggle in the water when he came again into the village and walked toward the inn. The little street was filled with people despite the lateness of the hour, and lamplighters were restoring Garre to its normal illumination. He found Spike in the midst of a crowd of colleagues in the bar, and Spike was happy.

Jim had no illusions as to the cause of his happiness. Spike was a newspaper man, and it mattered little to him professionally, however much he might feel in his private heart, whether Abe Bellamy succeeded or failed in his horrible attempt to destroy his enemies. It was the "story" that made Spike so riotously cheerful that Jim was suspicious.

"No, I'm not pickled, if that is what you mean. It is very much a case of suffering from the exuberance of my verbosity. I forget the lad who said that," said Spike, "but he was some recruit to the profession of space journalism."

"Where is Julius?"

"Come and see him." Spike squeaked in his joy. "He is sitting before the fire toasting ten-pound notes, and Fay has borrowed a flat-iron from the landlady and is doing laundry work that would turn a Chink blue with envy."

Jim followed him up the stairs. In the big sitting-room which Spike had occupied since his arrival at Garre, and which had been an informal club and meeting-place for the newly arrived reporters that day, Julius Savini was literally roasting bank-notes. Wearing a suit of Spike's pyjamas, he was sitting cross-legged on the hearthrug, holding at a distance from the fire, and with the aid of a toasting-fork, a square of white paper.

"I think that is done, Fay," he said as he looked at his "toast" with an approving eye.

Fay took the bank-note from the end of the fork, laid it upon the cloth, and rubbed it gently with the iron in her hand. She saw Jim and smiled. The landlady whose dressing-gown she wore was stout and short. Fay was tall and inclined to thinness. The effect was amusing.

Digitized by Google

"Come right in, Feathers. Julius is drying those bank-notes which old man Bellamy gave him the day he put us in the clink. They're our own," she added with a certain dignity, "and if that poor nut Lacy ever suggests that my Julius robbed him, I shall ask you to lock him up."

"How much money have you there, Fay?" asked Jim, kled.

"Nearly ten thousand. We haven't counted it as yet, but that is our estimate. Julius and I are going into the country start a poultry farm. Eggs have always been a passion ine. Where is Lacy?"

"I've sent him to the nearest hospital, and I don't think you need worry about him. When we searched him before he left, Sergeant Jackson found a considerable sum in his pocket."

"Lacy's money doesn't interest us," said Fay loftily. "Does it, Julius?"

He shook his head, but he did not meet the detective's eye.

"Envy none—that's been my motto, Feathers, all my life. If this poor fool has money, I'm glad. Where was it?"

"I forget. I think it was in a pocket under his foolish green coat, where the other money was."

"What other money?" asked Fay innocently. "Was it much—I mean the dough you found?"

"About two thousand," said Jim, and Fay uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"Do you hear that, Julius?" she asked sharply. "He had two thousand pounds in his pocket." She recovered her self-possession with an effort. "I'm very glad," she said without any great heartiness, "though it is a waste of good money, because a man like Lacy doesn't know how to spend it. Spending is an art, Feathers; you have to be educated up to it. I suppose it was in the left pocket of those funny pants of his?" she asked carelessly.

"I'm not sure, Fay," said Jim, "but I believe it was."

"And I told you, Julius——" she began reproachfully.

Julius coughed.

"I told you," she went on, "to take his gun and leave the

Digitized by Google

money alone. You see how nicely Julius behaved, Feathers?"

"Honest to goodness, Fay, are you going to run this farm of yours?"

She nodded.

"Mr. Howett is going to help us," she said. "And mind you, Feathers, in spite of our having capital—money that Julius has saved through years of hard work——"

Jim laughed.

"I'm not going to inquire how Julius got the money," he said, "and I'm willing to accept the story you told me just now, that the old man gave it to him. So don't think up any new explanation."

He took her by the shoulders, and, before Savini's discriminating and approving eye, he kissed her lightly on the cheek.

"You're too good a woman to be crook, and too nice a woman, and at heart too straight a woman," he said quietly. "And if Julius lets you go that way again I shall never forgive him."

She did not speak until Jim had gone, and then:

"Did you see that, Julius?" she asked a little unsteadily. "I like his cheek!"

"He likes yours apparently," said Julius, fixing a limp and soggy fifty on the end of the toasting-fork. "That fellow's too good for a policeman."

There are points of view.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LXXIV

The Secret of the Green Archer

The following morning Jim attended by appointment to meet Mr. Howett. Valerie had gone to town with her mother, and Jim and Howett were alone. And he was his old, brisk self; the kindly eyes that gleamed behind strong glasses held the old power, the old command.

"It seems to me that you ought to know the whole story from beginning to end, Captain Featherstone," he said. "I think Valerie has already told you—no, I will begin at the very beginning.

"There were two brothers, Abel and Michael Bellamy. Abel was the elder, Michael six years his junior. The Bellamys' circumstances were very much like mine; that is to say, they were poor at first, and they could not give to Abel the education they certainly gave to Mike. From the very first Abe hated his brother, and when, as he grew up, he saw the difference in their social position, he hated with a more bitter and a more decisive loathing. Almost from the first Abe made money. He had a remarkable series of successful building speculations. Gold simply flowed into his lap, but for all that he never forgave his brother for his educational advantages, or, it may be, for the favour that had been shown to the younger son; and after their parents' deaths he lost no time in plotting his brother's downfall.

"He might have grown tired of that hobby, but, happily or unhappily, Michael fell in love with a woman—the only woman in the world who has ever inspired anything which bears the slightest resemblance to love in Abel's life. Her name was Held—Elaine Held, a girl of a good family, who committed the indiscretion of showing Bellamy how much his ugliness appalled her. Abe, in his brutal way, went to the girl's father, offered him a large sum of money if he would stop the marriage of Michael and Elaine and induce

Digitized by Google

the girl to marry him. The father, who was a member of a good social set in Cleveland, rejected the idea indignantly, and the marriage took place.

"It was the first serious set-back that Abe Bellamy had met with in his career, and he took it to heart to such an extent that he spent years in organising methods for bringing his brother to ruin. From time to time he made attempts to induce Elaine to divorce her husband on some excuse and marry him. Elaine never told her husband, and to the day of his death poor Michael Bellamy knew nothing of the cause of his ruin.

"A child was born—a boy—and for a time Abel ceased his persecution. It was after the birth of the second child that, meeting Elaine by chance one day in New York, the old desire seems to have revived, and he renewed his old plea. When she rejected his suggestion, it was, I believe, in such terms as would leave Abe Bellamy in no doubt as to how she felt about him, and he went away swearing revenge. A month later the little girl, the second child, was taken out by its nurse, and whilst the attention of the girl was distracted elsewhere the child was kidnapped.

"Abe sought the distracted mother and father as a disinterested friend, offered to expend the whole of his wealth to recover the baby. Secretly he conveyed to the woman the price she had to pay, which was then, as always, that she should divorce her husband and marry him. She dared not tell Michael, although she was suspicious that Abe Bellamy was behind the abduction. She could only pray that his heart would be softened and the child restored. At last, when Michael had decided to put detectives on the trail, Abe Bellamy seized the opportunity which the River Bend disaster offered, sent a man accidentally to drop the shoe near other personal débris that had been gathered for purposes of identification—and the rest was easy. Faked witnesses were produced who saw the woman and the child, and the hunt was dropped."

"But that was not Valerie," said Jim. "That occurred twenty years ago, and Valerie came to you twenty-three years ago."

Digitized by Google

"There were two River Bend disasters. That is where John Bellamy made a mistake. The first occurred twenty-three years ago; there was one at exactly the same spot three years later. Wood, or Bellamy as I will call him, had only the scrappiest of information to go upon. He had heard from his mother the story of the girl's abduction, and had not attempted to verify the date of the River Bend disaster until his mother had disappeared.

"Soon after this terrible happening Michael Bellamy died, and, never doubting that now she was a widow she would marry him, Abe Bellamy came to the girl—she was still a girl—and renewed his suit, only again to be rejected. He threatened all kinds of vengeance, and remembering the fate that had overtaken her daughter, the death of whom she had laid at Bellamy's door, she raised what money she could, sold the little property which her husband had left her, and went to England. It was years before Bellamy traced her. She was living in her maiden name, in comfortable circumstances, at a place not many miles from here—at Guildford. Her son was training in a technical college to be an engineer when Bellamy again appeared on the scene, and, making no proposal of marriage, but posing only as one who regretted his folly and was repentant, induced her to withdraw her savings, which were invested in a sound commercial concern, and to put them into some wild-cat scheme, with the result that she lost almost every cent. Her courage was wonderful. She took what was left of her shattered fortune and removed to London, taking the boy with her, and living near the college where he was receiving his final training.

"Bellamy had once struck at Elaine through her child. He decided to repeat his tactics. The boy found himself surrounded by people who were anxious to show him hospitality, and, suspecting nothing, he was taken to a house in the West End, where wealthy, foolish people are preyed upon by professional gamblers and their harpies. Young Bellamy was neither rich nor foolish; he hadn't been in this gilded den very long before he realised its character. Before he could go, one of the women made an outcry that

Digitized by Google

she had been robbed of a diamond brooch. The police were called in, the brooch was found in Bellamy's pocket, or rather pinned on the inside of his evening jacket, which he had taken off to play a game of billiards, and he was brought before a magistrate and sent to prison for six months with hard labour.

"This time Bellamy came into the open. He told the woman that he was responsible, made no secret that he had engineered the whole thing, and threatened even worse penalties. It was about this time that he bought Garre Castle, and from the first, I think, he was influenced by the strength of it, and by the opportunities which it had for holding prisoner the object of his malice. So far as John Bellamy was concerned, he was as good as his word. One of Abe's satellites brought him into touch with a crook warder, a man named Creager, who had been under suspicion of trafficking with prisoners, and on one occasion nearly lost his job. It was probably Creager who sketched the outlines of their dastardly plot. Abe would hardly know the law of England or the rules of prisons, and it is likely that Creager himself was the author of the frame-up which followed.

"One morning a cry for help was heard from Bellamy's cell, and Creager staggered out with his head bleeding. You remember there was a letter which came into your possession, in which Creager said that he was certain to get hurt. The wound was self-inflicted by a spade, which had no right to be in the cell, and which Creager afterwards swore the man had smuggled in inside his clothes. The boy—he was little more—was taken to the punishment cell, and in course of time brought before the visiting justices.

"Now, in prisons, as you know, Captain Featherstone, there is only one punishment for a man who assaults the guard, and that is the lash. It is a horrible punishment, though I am not saying that for certain crimes it is not more effective than imprisonment. The boy received thirty-five lashes, and bears the marks on his shoulders to this day. When he came out of prison he went in search of his mother, only to find that she had disappeared. With the

Digitized by Google

prison taint on him, he changed his name to John Wood, and, working night and day, alternately at his lathe and in search of his mother, he succeeded in inventing a very valuable device, which he subsequently patented and which has brought him a small fortune.

"All this time he never ceased to search for Elaine Held. When the war broke out he joined the army. Here he had to give his own name, because the authorities demanded his birth certificate. He was reported killed whilst flying over Germany. The mistake was afterwards discovered and rectified in the official gazette, and one of the most extraordinary features of the case is that Abe Bellamy did not know that this correction had been made.

"The boy's passion for children developed with his fortune. He founded one of a series of homes for babies in Belgium, and, I believe, is extending his scheme to England and America. And, of course, he made the will in favour of John Wood, because, as a soldier, he had accumulated a number of things which he wanted to come back to himself, and that was the only way. There again we have the fact that the English authorities never bothered to discover whether or not Bellamy was dead. They accepted the official notification, and Bellamy passed into possession of the legacy which he had left himself!"

Jim waited for him to go on, but apparently Mr. Howett had finished.

"And that is all the story, Captain Featherstone," said the grave man.

Jim looked up at the ceiling and puffed a ring of smoke upwards.

"In Cloister Wood there is a cottage," he said. "That cottage is exactly five miles by road from the Addley Aerodrome, which maintains a mail connection with Belgium summer and winter."

"I believe that is so."

"I am told," said Jim, still regarding the ceiling with a fixed gaze, "that Mr. Wood was a frequent passenger."

"That may have been the case."

"Used to arrive late in the afternoon and leave early in

Digitized by Google

the morning. Was always in Belgium if you wired to him, as one did after the Creager murder."

"That is possible," said Mr. Howett again.

"Another curious accomplishment of John Wood Bellamy is his proficiency with the bow and arrow, which may be, as you say, Mr. Howett, a coincidence, just as it was in your case."

"How do you know?" asked Mr. Howett quickly.

"I had inquiries made in Belgium quite a long time ago —in fact, after the death of Coldharbour Smith—and I discovered that Wood was in London. And I found that quite close to Wenduyne is an extensive stretch of sand-dunes, where a man, an eccentric Englishman—they called him an Englishman, though he is an American—could practise archery for many hours a day, and had been doing so for years, even before the war. That, you will admit, is remarkable."

Mr. Howett turned squarely to face Jim Featherstone.

"I'm going to ask you a question, Featherstone," he said. "You're an officer of the police, and you have certain duties to do; but I understand that there are times when the police turn a blind eye, even to the most heinous crimes. You call that 'acting in the public interest.' It is a fetish with the people of this country, this 'public interest'; and I'm not so certain that it isn't a fetish that decent people can worship. Who is the Green Archer?"

"You ask me that," said Jim, "in all seriousness?"

Mr. Howett nodded.

"I will tell you who the Green Archer is," said Jim, still avoiding the older man's eyes. "He is the man who took Elaine Held from the dungeon where the old man kept her, and carried her off in the middle of the night, and brought her to Lady's Manor, and was discovered by you and held up by you at the pistol-point, until you learnt the truth and assisted him to escape."

"I didn't know who he was," said Mr. Howett quickly. "His face was masked. I found the underground passage later by accident. In fact, I once went into Garre Castle and was seen by Julius."

Digitized by Google

"Bellamy made a similar discovery when he went down to the store-room to look for milk. Lacy told me that this morning," said Jim. He told me also that Bellamy had found a handkerchief—it was one dropped by Valerie when she was inspecting this house, and found by the Green Archer.

"The weeping woman, whose voice Valerie heard, was Elaine Held, and she was driven by a circuitous route to the cottage in the wood. The Green Archer is the man whose boat you found the night Smith was killed. He is the man who was near enough to Spike Holland in the vestibule of the Carlton Hotel to hear Creager, whom he recognised and who did not recognise him, any more than Abe Bellamy recognised him when he went to buy the castle. He heard Creager, I say, tell Holland that he had a good story, and decided upon his death rather than that story should be told, for he misguidedly imagined that the story was of his flogging, and that he was to be betrayed, and all his midnight searchings of Garre Castle were to be in vain.

"The Green Archer is the man who saw Valerie go over the wall into the grounds of Garre Castle, and, abandoning his usual method, followed her and saved her from the dogs. I will go further," Jim went on carefully. "He was one of the first of the men to meet Valerie when she came out from the castle. He was the man who took Mrs. Bellamy's diary, which disclosed her identity."

"What are you going to do? Give him a name?" asked Mr. Howett.

"It is not in the public interest that I should name my future brother-in-law," said Jim, "even if he is a murderer" —the challenge this time was definite—"even if he is an executioner," said Jim, and the old man held out his hand.

"If I know anything about the workings of your mind, Jim Featherstone," he said, "you're going to resign from a good job. Maybe you're right. They tell me you've got money of your own, or I'd offer you the best position it is in my power to give you."

Digitized by Google

"I should like to be your son-in-law," said Jim, and for a second the old man's face clouded.

"Well, you may even be that," he said thoughtfully. "It depends entirely upon what answer Elaine Bellamy returns to a question which I am going to put to her just as soon as she is well enough to discuss matrimony."

THE END

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
wils
825W155 OGre
Wallace, Edgar, 1875-1932.
The green archer.
3 1951 001 997 056 Y

WILSON
ANNEX